

Activity 7: Britain and the Legacy of Loss - Part 1

Student Worksheet

Task 1

Write down three emotions or feelings that come to mind when you think about the word 'survivor'.

1.....

2.....

3.....

Task 2

Working in pairs, look at **Handout 1**, which sets out extracts from two speeches made in the UK House of Commons on 21 November 1938. These speeches formed part of the debate on whether Britain would accept more Jewish refugees from Germany, following the violence of the November Pogrom on 9-10 November 1938 (*Kristallnacht*).

One of you should read the first speech in the **Handout 1** and the other should read the second speech. Then discuss with each other what you have learned.

(You may also refer to **Handout 2**, which provides a glossary of key terms.)

Then, working in pairs, answer the following questions.

What reasons does Mr Philip Noel-Baker give in his speech to support the view that the November Pogrom (*Kristallnacht*) was organised by the Nazi regime? Try to provide at least two reasons.

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Task 2 continued

Jewish adults wanting to flee Nazi persecution were required to provide financial guarantees to secure a British visa (to cover their accommodation and maintenance costs). From Mr Philip Noel-Baker's speech, can you identify what circumstances made it particularly difficult for refugees to satisfy this condition in Germany, 1938?

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What reasons does Mr Samuel Hoare give in his speech to explain why the British Government would not permit "immigration on any big scale"?¹ Try to provide at least two reasons.

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From Mr Samuel Hoare's speech, can you explain the approach taken by Britain to child refugees fleeing Nazi Germany? Try to include whether there were any limits on immigration, any sponsorship or financial conditions, and which organisations had responsibility for arranging the programme (which later became known as the Kindertransport).

¹ Hansard, *Racial, Religious and Political Minorities*, HC Deb 21 November 1938 vol 341 c1468 <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1938/nov/21/racial-religious-and-political-minorities#column_1428> [accessed 21 May 2022].



Handout 4
**Activity 7: Britain and the
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Student Worksheet

Task 2 continued

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Does the evidence in **Handout 1** indicate that people in Britain responded positively or negatively to the refugee crisis in 1938 – or does it reveal a more complex picture about Britain’s response? Try to explain your answer.

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Task 3

Now read the following biography for Irene Kirstein Watts and watch the video clip, where Irene describes some of her experiences of being a survivor and Kindertransport refugee in Britain during and after the war.

The cover photograph of this activity is of Irene, with her mother (Margot Kirstein, in the centre) and her brother (Bernot Kirstein, on the right) taken in Berlin, 1935.

Biography of Irene Kirstein Watts

Irene Kirstein Watts was born on 24 May 1931 in Berlin, Germany. She grew up in an Orthodox Jewish family. Irene and her family were persecuted by the Nazis during the pre-war period and her father, Ziegmund Kirstein, was imprisoned in Sachsenhausen concentration camp. In December 1938, Irene (aged 8) boarded the Kindertransport to the United Kingdom. She lived in England initially but when war broke out, she was evacuated to Llanelli, Wales and was later fostered in London. Irene’s parents escaped to the United Kingdom during the war and eventually lived in Swansea. Irene, her husband and four children emigrated to Canada in 1968.

Irene was interviewed on 28 June 1998 in White Rock, British Columbia, Canada.

Then, working in pairs/groups, answer the questions below.

What does the video testimony tell you about some of the challenges Irene faced as a survivor of Nazi persecution, living in England and Wales? List five pieces of information.

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....



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Task 3 continued

What does Irene say about the impact these experiences had on bringing up her own children?

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What does Irene’s testimony tell you about her experience as a Holocaust survivor in general? Does her testimony match the ideas of survival you considered in **Task 1**? If not, what insights have you gained from her testimony?

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Based on your learning in **Task 2** and **Task 3**, how would you evaluate the response of Britain and British people to Jewish refugees before and during the Holocaust?

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