

KINDERTRANSPORT

rescuing children

on the brink of war

ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

May 19 – November 17, 2024

Docent Guide

May 2024

Kindertransport – Rescuing Children on the Brink of War showcases the astonishing rescue effort that, in only nine months, brought thousands of unaccompanied children from Nazi Europe to the United Kingdom. Through personal artifacts, stories, and firsthand testimony, those who lived through the Kindertransport program tell its history.

The exhibition's thoughtful, artistic design draws visitors in and features 75 personal artifacts, including items from Illinois Holocaust Museum's collection, Survivor testimonies, and quotes that chart the heart-wrenching decisions parents made in sending their children away to safety. *Kindertransport* serves as a powerful testament to both the resilience of the human spirit and the importance of honoring the legacy of those who endured unimaginable suffering.

The exhibition traces the experiences of several *Kinder*, from their childhoods in Nazi Germany to their parents' decision to send them to safety, to their new lives in the UK, and finally to their post-war reality. Photographs, artifacts, and testimony on the above themes provide a glimpse into the children's experiences, allowing the visitor to understand individual experiences and extrapolate out to the broader stories of the *Kindertransports*.

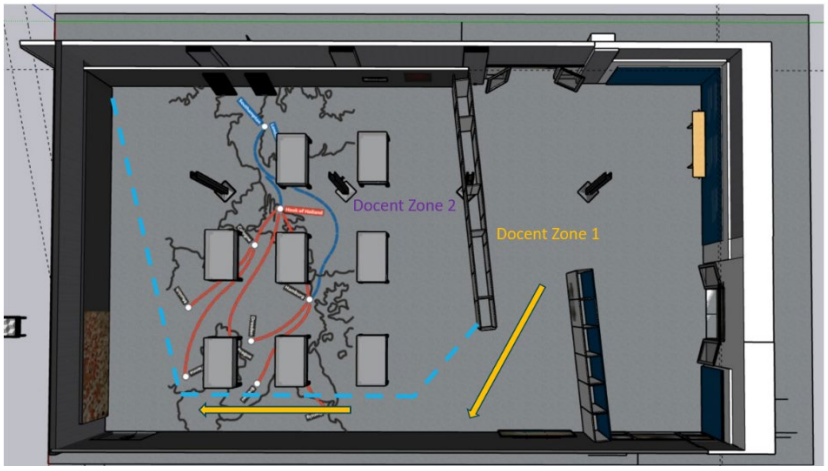
An important theme of this exhibition is why parents made the difficult decision to send their children to safety. All student field trips (as a portion of an In Our Voices tour and as a dedicated field trip) will spend time in the World Before and Life Under the Swastika sections of Karkomi; be sure to speak to this aspect of the history in those sections of your tour. For adult tours that do not also include time in Karkomi, you'll spend more time on the "why" during your time in this exhibition. The organizing themes of the exhibition are:

- No life in Germany
- Putting together a Children's Transport
- I had my teddy bear
- On the train
- Determined to like England
- We await your responses
- You can't go back to square one

The exhibition features several local Survivors of Kindertransports. Information about Fred Sinay and Lucille Wolf is available in your Survivor Stories Booklets. Lucille's story is also featured in the Museum's audio tour. Information about Ernie Heimann and Felix Weil is available on the Museum's website:

https://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/profiles/ernie-heimann/
https://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/profiles/felix-weil/

For all tours with more than one docent, the exhibition will be used in two "zones". Zone 1 includes the introduction area and the south and west walls of the exhibition. Zone 2 includes the artifact cases and the north and east walls:



20-Minute "In Our Voices" and "Be an Upstander" Tour Segment
Starting Point A: Intro/Zone 1
Starting Point B: Artifact Cases/Zone 2

- Introduction (3 minutes)

Introduce the exhibition, which explores the experiences of both children and parents before and after making the difficult decision to separate. Briefly introduce antisemitism in Nazi Germany, including anti-Jewish legislation and restrictions on all aspects of Jewish life, and how *Kristallnacht* moved the situation for Jewish families from difficult to critical.

ASK:

- Why do you think parents decided to send their children on Kindertransports?
- What challenges do you think children faced? (Language and cultural differences, separation from family, uncertainty of the war and whether they would be reunited with their parents)
- What challenges do you think parents faced? Were these "choiceless choices"? What do we mean by that?
- Was sending a child (or children) on a Kindertransport an act of resistance?

Transition: Parents faced a "choiceless choice" in deciding whether or not to send their children away. Let's look at how some families responded to that choice.

- Separation of Families (7 min) (Zone 1)

Using the graphics of the Moos family, the video of children and parents saying goodbye, the wall panels of final letters from parents to children, and the wall of ID tags, discuss the difficult choices and impacts on parents of sending their children on Kindertransports.

- In pairs or small groups, have students read one of the letters from parent or sibling to child or caretaker. As a group, discuss the content and tone of the letters. Did parents share what they were really feeling in the letters? Why or why not?

Transition: Now, we'll take a closer look at the children's experiences.

- Children's Experiences (7 min) (Zone 2)

Using the quotes and artifacts in the cases, and the banners telling the stories of local Kinder, explore the experiences of children who were sent to live with strangers in a new country. You may choose to focus on cases 3 ("I had my teddy bear"), 5 ("On the train") and 6 ("Determined to like England"). Be sure to highlight one of the local Kinder stories, told via the wall banners.

  - How do the children describe their experiences in England?
  - How much did the children know about why their parents were sending them away? How did they feel about being sent away?

If time allows, discuss the breadth of efforts to safe children and the obstacles faced, using the final two panels ("Other Children Rescue Missions on the Brink of War" and "Kindertransport to the United States? 'Too Hot to Handle'").

- What obstacles were there to other rescue efforts? Why weren't these efforts more successful?

- Conclusion (3 min)

One theme of the story of the Kindertransports is of a great, but flawed, humanitarian gesture. As a group, discuss who the Upstanders were in the larger story of the Kindertransports.

- Why did people choose to take in children they didn't know?
- What characteristics did the parents who chose to send their children to England display?
- From what you've learned, were the Kindertransports an act of resistance?

DEDICATED FIELD TRIP (Grades 5 and up)
85 minutes; 80 students maximum

Tour components:
Kindertransport exhibition: 30 minutes
Starting Point A: Exhibition Intro (Zone 1)
Starting Point B: Artifact Cases (Zone 2)
Karkomi exhibition: 30 minutes
Starting point C: World Before
Starting point D: To Stay or To Go

KINDERTRANSPORT (30 minutes)

- Introduction (5 min)

Introduce the exhibition, which explores the experiences of both children and parents before and after making the difficult decision to separate. Briefly introduce antisemitism in Nazi Germany, including anti-Jewish legislation and restrictions on all aspects of Jewish life, and how *Kristallnacht* moved the situation for Jewish families from difficult to critical.

  - Why do you think parents decided to send their children on Kindertransports?
  - What challenges do you think children faced? (Language and cultural differences, separation from family, uncertainty of the war and whether they would be reunited with their parents)

- What challenges do you think parents faced? Were these "choiceless choices"? What do we mean by that?
- Was sending a child (or children) on a Kindertransport an act of resistance?

Transition: Parents faced a "choiceless choice" in deciding whether or not to send their children away. Let's look at how some families responded to that choice.

- Separation of Families (10 min) (Zone 1)

Using the graphics of the Moos family, the video of children and parents saying goodbye, the wall panels of final letters from parents to children, and the wall of ID tags, discuss the difficult choices and impacts on parents of sending their children on Kindertransports.

- In pairs or trios, have students read one of the letters from parent to child or caretaker. As a group, discuss the content and tone of the letters. Did parents share what they were really feeling in the letters? Why or why not?

Transition: Now, we'll take a closer look at the children's experiences.

- Children's Experiences (10 min) (Zone 2)

Using the quotes and artifacts in the cases, and the banners telling the stories of local Kinder, explore the experiences of children who were sent to live with strangers in a new country. You may choose to focus on cases 3 ("I had my teddy bear"), 5 ("On the train") and 6 ("Determined to like England"). Be sure to highlight one of the local Kinder stories, told via the wall banners. Local Kinder Lucille Wolf and Fred Sinay are included in your Survivor Stories booklets, and Fred and Hannah Lorsch have artifacts in the exhibition.

Divide students into pairs or small groups; have them choose an artifact and share the answers to these questions with the group:

- How do the children describe their experiences in England?
- How much did the children know about why their parents were sending them away? How did they feel about being sent away?

If time allows, discuss the breadth of efforts to safe children and the obstacles faced, using the final two panels ("Other Children Rescue Missions on the Brink of War" and "Kindertransport to the United States? 'Too Hot to Handle'").

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- Conclusion (3 min)

One theme of the story of the Kindertransports is of a great, but flawed, humanitarian gesture. As a group, discuss who the Upstanders were in the larger story of the Kindertransports.

- Why did people choose to take in children they didn't know?
- What characteristics did the parents who chose to send their children to England display?
- From what you've learned, were the Kindertransports an act of resistance?

Transition to Karkomi: Now that we have learned about the Kindertransports, let's learn more about what was happening in Germany that led parents to choose to send their children to Britain.

Karkomi Holocaust Exhibition (30 mins)
You have 30 minutes for this portion of your tour, using the portion of Karkomi from World Before through *Kristallnacht*. Emphasize how life for Jewish families changed in Germany over the course of the 1930s and the events and conditions that led parents to choose to place their children on a Kindertransports.

ADULT GROUP TOURS
45 minutes; 2 docents maximum

Starting points: Introductory Panel, Artifact Cases

Tour Overview:

- Introduction (3 minutes)

Introduce the exhibition, which traces the experiences of several *Kinder*, from their childhoods in Nazi Germany to their parents' decision to send them to safety, their new lives in the UK, and finally their post-war reality using photographs, video, letters, testimony, and artifacts. What led parents to make the heart-wrenching decision to send their children to live with strangers in a far-away country? Was doing so an act of resistance? What challenges did the children face? What obstacles did those who took in the children have to navigate?

Transition: What was happening in Germany that led to the creation of the Kindertransports?

- Why were the Kindertransports necessary? (5 minutes) (Zone 1)

Note: This section may be shortened if your group will also tour Karkomi.

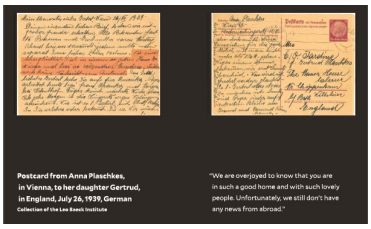
Using the introductory panel, the Moos family's story (exhibition script pgs 25-26), and the departure video, set up the historical context of 1938 Germany and the creation of the Kindertransports. Include increasing anti-Jewish legislation, barriers to Jewish emigration, and the November Pogrom (Kristallnacht). Did the Moos family face a "choiceless choice"? What do we mean by that?

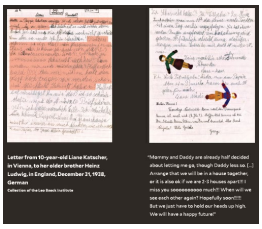
Transition: Parents faced a "choiceless choice" in deciding whether or not to send their children away. Let's look at how some families responded to that choice.

- Final Letters & Wall of Identification Tags (7 minutes) (Zone 1)

This section of the exhibition features letters sent between parents, host families, and siblings to Kinder. Give your group a few minutes to read the letters, asking them to consider:

  - What is the tone of the letter?
  - Why was the letter written—to give accurate information? To reassure the recipient? Something else?



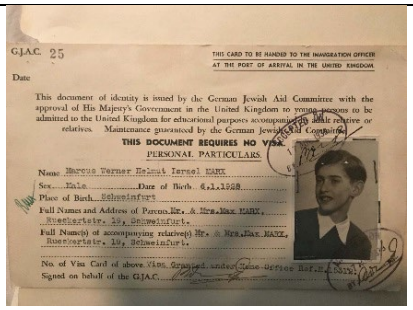
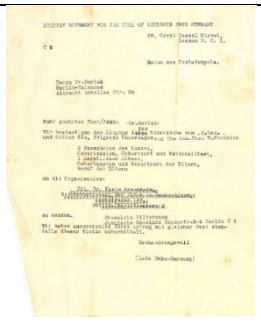
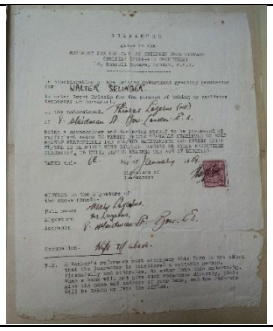


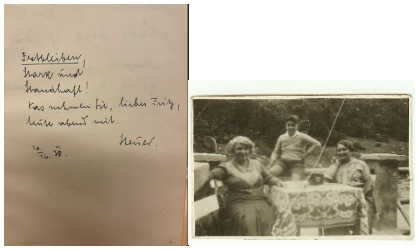
Invite the group to look at the Wall of Identification Tags, representing the nearly 10,000 children who were able to escape German-controlled Europe via Kindertransports.

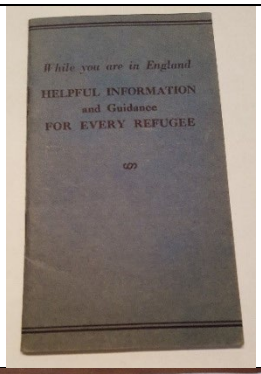
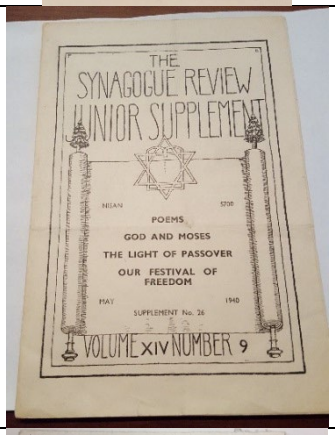
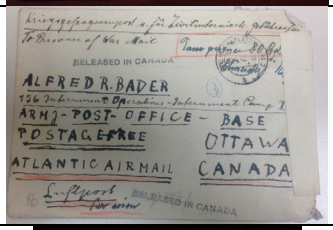
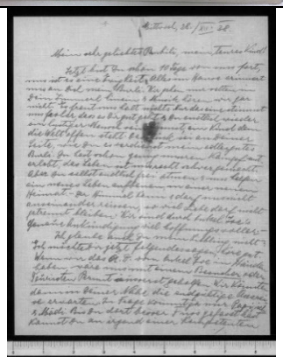
Transition: Now, we'll take a closer look at the children's experiences.

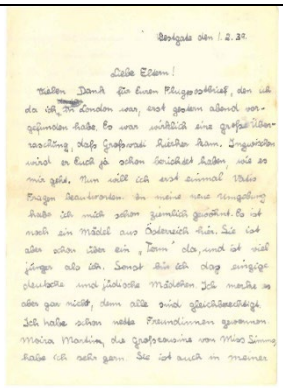
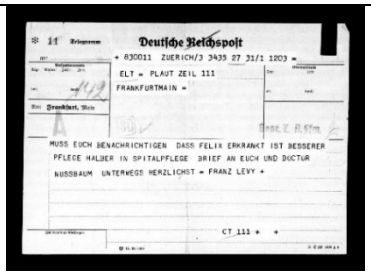
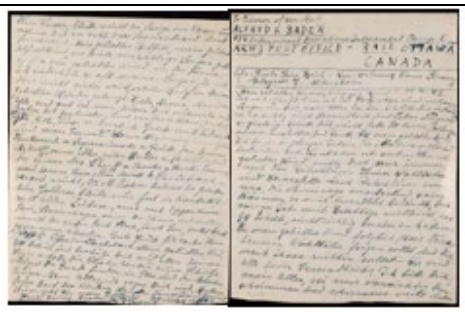
- Artifact Cases (10 minutes) (Zone 2)

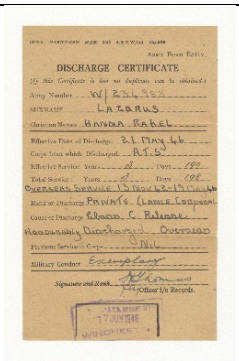
Using the artifacts, guide your group in exploring the process of the Kindertransports: the challenges faced by children and parents, and examples of resistance and of upstanders. Suggested artifacts/stories to focus on are below. (You will not have time to discuss all of these!)

Theme	Artifact	Story
Case 1: No life in Germany		*You will have covered this subject earlier in the exhibition; if you choose to use this case, focus briefly on anti-Jewish propaganda and restrictions on education.*
Case 2: Putting together a Children's Transport	 G.J.A.C. 25 THIS CARD TO BE HANDED TO THE IMMIGRATION OFFICER AT THE PORT OF ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED KINGDOM Date This document of identity is issued by the German Jewish Aid Committee with the approval of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to young persons to be admitted to the United Kingdom for educational purposes accompanied by adult relative or relatives. Maintenance guaranteed by the German Jewish Aid Committee. THIS DOCUMENT REQUIRES NO VISA PERSONAL PARTICULARS Name Marcus Werner Helmut Israel MARX Sex Male Date of Birth 6.1.1928 Place of Birth Schweinfurt Full Names and Address of Parents Mr. & Mrs. Max MARX, Ruecherstr. 19, Schweinfurt. Full Name(s) of accompanying relative(s) Mr. & Mrs. Jac. MARX, Ruecherstr. 19, Schweinfurt. No. of Visa Card of above Visa Granted under Aliens Orders Refer. No. Signed on behalf of the G.J.A.C.	Document issued for Helmut Marx's admittance to the United Kingdom, August 17, 1939, German 11-year-old Helmut and his older sister Eva Susanne were supposed to travel together to England on a Kindertransports, but since Helmut was missing a travel document, his sister had to go without him. The siblings reunited in the Unites States in 1945.
		Letter from Movement for the Care of Children from Germany to Dr. Berlak in Berlin, requesting passport photos and other documentation for his daughter, German 13-year-old Marianne Berlak left Germany for England on a Kindertransport in January 1939. (See also case 7)
,		Guarantee given to the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany by Phineas Lazarus for 12-year-old Walter Selinger, January 6, 1939 "We received a letter from Mr. Lazarus and his lovely wife Mary, telling us that they would sponsor me to come to London. He made all the arrangements."

Case 3: “I had my teddy bear”		Card game with photos of German sights, taken on a Kindertransport by 15-year-old Kurt Quittner on December 11, 1938
		Ankle boots, brought on a Kindertransport by 2-year-old Esther Rosenfeld from Adelsheim in June 1939
	 	Autograph book, given to Fritz Sinai (later Fred Sinay) by his aunt “Tante Futtschie” on his Bar Mitzvah on December 8, 1934 Fritz brought this book with him when he left Vienna on a Kindertransport on December 10, 1938. It is filled with well wishes for his voyage. Inscription in German from the day of Fritz’s departure: “Stand firm, Strong and Steadfast! Take these words with you this evening, dear Fritz.” [Photo caption] Fritz Sinai at age 12 or 13 with his mother Else on the right and his aunt Julie on the left on holiday at Bad Gastein spa, Austria, ca. 1934 NOTE: LOCAL SURVIVOR
Case 5: On the train		Circular Kindertransport luggage label used by 11-year-old Hanni Friedler of Magdeburg, on the sixteenth Kindertransport in June 1939 This transport traveled to Southampton via Bremen on the steamer Europa.

		German passport with stamp from immigration officer in Harwich, issued to Anneliese Erlanger, Gunzburg, Germany, August 8, 1939 Anneliese's widowed mother sent her daughter to England on August 24, 1939; her younger sister, Inge, stayed behind. Anneliese would never see her mother and sister again.
Case 6: Determined to like England		Brochure "While you are in England. Helpful Information and Guidance for Every Refugee", German Jewish Aid Committee, Jewish Board of Deputies, London, ca. 1938
		The Synagogue Review Junior Supplement No. 26, May 1940 Jewish organizations encouraged the children to attend synagogue and engage in ceremonial events.
		Envelope for letter from Gisela Reich to her son, "Prisoner of War" Alfred Bader in Ottawa, Canada Alfred Bader came to England in 1938 and was interned in Canada. (See also case 8)
Case 7: We await your responses		Letter from Leopoldine Katscher, in Vienna, to her son Heinz Ludwig, in England, December 28, 1938, German "Now you are already 10 days away from us, an eternity to us. […] Nothing gives us any pleasure. The only thing that makes us more content is that you are doing well and that you can finally be a jovial human being again, a child to whom the world is open. May luck be

		on your side as you deserve, my fine, good Burli. You have experienced enough of our fight. Life has become very difficult for us. But you should finally breathe freely and help us begin a new life in a new country […]"
		Letter from Marianne Berlak, in Westgate, to her parents, Ruth and Hermann Berlak, February 1, 1939, German, facsimile "I have adjusted pretty well to my new environment. There is another girl from Austria here. [...] Other than that, I am the only German and Jewish girl. But I don't notice it, because everyone is equal. I have already found nice girlfriends." (See also case 2)
		Telegram to Emil and Alice Plaut, in Frankfurt, German The telegram notified Emil and Alice Plaut that their son Felix, who had arrived in England on a Kindertransport in June 1939, had fallen ill. Felix died from a sudden brain hemorrhage in January 1940.
Case 8: You can't go back to square one		Final letter from Gisela Reich, in Vienna, to her son Alfred Bader, in Canada, June 11, 1942, nine days before her deportation to Theresienstadt, where she was murdered in November 1942 "My beloved, dear, only child! Day and night my thoughts and worries are with you, my everything. I beg you, be careful with your health and life, do not do anything dangerous. […] My beloved child, may God guard you and protect you in all your ways, and give you Eliyahu Hanavi as a guardian[…]" (See also case 6)

		Discharge Certificate for Hannah Lazarus from the British Army Auxiliary Territorial Service, 1946 Hannah left Berlin on a Kindertransport with her younger brother George. Her aunt found sponsors in Glasgow, Scotland, where the children lived with various families. Hannah attended school, trained as a nurse for infants, and served in the British Army Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1943 to 1946. Hannah's widowed father was able to leave Germany via Cuba, and the family reunited in the United States in 1946. NOTE: LOCAL SURVIVOR

Transition: We are fortunate to have a number of Kindertransport Survivors in our community. Let's look at some of their experiences.

- Local Kinder (10 minutes) (Zone 2)

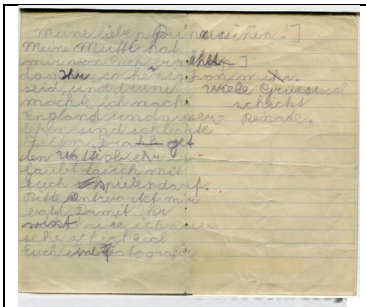
Using the banners and the video, share the stories of local survivors who were on Kindertransports. Artifacts from Fred Sinay and Hannah Lorsch are in the exhibition (see above).

Transition: Many organizations and individuals attempted to organize rescue efforts but faced a range of political and logistical obstacles.

- Other Rescue Missions, Rescue to the US, "Princess" Letter (7 minutes) (Zone 2)

Panels in this section discuss additional efforts to bring children out of German-controlled Europe, including the 8 transports of children from Prague organized by 29-year-old Nicholas Winton, which saved more than 600 children, and the Youth Aliyah, which brought thousands of Jewish teenagers to British-Mandate Palestine. Rescue efforts in the US, including the Wagner-Rogers bill that proposed bringing 20,000 unaccompanied children to the US outside of immigration quotas, which was modeled on the Kindertransports but died in Congress. Within the framework of the quota system, more than 1,000 children escaped persecution and came to the US through the efforts of organizations such as the German Jewish Children's Aid and the American Friends Service Committee.

Ask: why were rescue efforts to the UK more successful than those to the US?





Renata (c. 1937-38 1st grade)
Brno, Czechoslovakia

Letter written by Renata Polgarova, German, [Spring 1939]
ON LOAN COURTESY OF THE FLORENCE AND LAURENCE SPUNGEN FAMILY FOUNDATION
Renata was born an only child in Brno, Czechoslovakia, on July 15, 1931. In the spring of 1939, at age 7, she was told by her parents that she would be traveling to England. When she learned that England had a royal family with two princesses who were about her age, Renata wrote a letter to them. The letter was never mailed but survived. Renata arrived in England on a Kindertransport, organized by Nicholas Winton, on August 2, 1939, and spent the war with the Quaker family of Harry and Edna Daniels. She was reunited with her parents in 1946.

My Dear Princesses,
My Mommy has told me about you, how sweet you are, and therefore I would like to come to England. Apart from that these are bad times. Ask your Daddy if he permits you to play with me. Please answer me soon. I am enclosing a photograph, so that you know what I look like.
Many greetings from Renate

[Photo caption]
Renata, c. 1937-1938

- Conclusion (3 min)

One theme of the story of the Kindertransports is of a great, but flawed, humanitarian gesture. As a group, discuss who the Upstanders were in the larger story of the Kindertransports.

  - Why did people choose to take in children they didn't know?
  - What characteristics did the parents who chose to send their children to England display?
  - From what you've learned, were the Kindertransports an act of resistance?