

A Teacher's Resource to

# The Children of *W*illesden Lane

Created by Facing History and Ourselves  
Funded by the Milken Family Foundation

# Acknowledgements

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The companion CD to *The Children of Willesden Lane* was produced and engineered by Theo Mondle and produced by Mona Golabek. The CD was recorded at Fields Pianos in Los Angeles, California in March of 2003 on a Steinway 9 concert grand piano. Special thanks to Richard Burkhart and Doug Huberman for their insightful support and contributions in making the CD.

Public, private and parochial schools wishing to integrate *The Children of Willesden Lane* into their curriculum can obtain the book, this study guide, and companion music CD at significantly reduced rates. Mona Golabek's non-profit foundation, Hold On To Your Music, in partnership with AOL/Time Warner and others, is implementing a national plan to provide subsidized books to libraries and schools. To apply, provide a contact person, plan for use, and written commitment to participate in a program evaluation that reports observable and measurable student results. Subsidies will vary depending upon financial need. For more information, contact:

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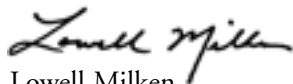
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## Message from Lowell Milken

When my brother Michael and I established the Milken Family Foundation in 1982, it was with the goal of helping people help themselves and those around them to lead productive, satisfying lives. We believed then, as we do now, that positive change can occur even under the most difficult of circumstances, given the vision and purpose of individuals of all ages. Therefore, when author and pianist Mona Golabek shared *The Children of Willesden Lane* with me, I was at once struck by young Lisa Jura's triumph over adversity during one of history's bleakest periods. In recounting her mother's story, Ms. Golabek brings to life the capacity of young people to accomplish extraordinary things, particularly if guided on their way by even a few caring and committed adults.

*The Children of Willesden Lane* represents an unusual opportunity to educate and inspire current and future generations of students and teachers in the lessons of history and human perseverance. By maximizing the book's message through this incisive curriculum developed by Facing History and Ourselves, together with the expertise and involvement of our Milken National Educator network, it is very gratifying to think of the many young people who will benefit from the opportunity to learn and reflect.

Lisa Jura's experiences illuminate the heroic potential of everyday people not only to change their own lives, but to inspire courage and hard work in others. At the Milken Family Foundation, we believe that quality teachers are among society's most important heroes. It seems fitting, therefore, that it will be educators in English, history, music, and other disciplines who will use this guide to convey the enduring lessons and values of *The Children of Willesden Lane* to students for years to come.



Lowell Milken  
Chairman and Co-Founder  
Milken Family Foundation

### **About the Milken Family Foundation**

Under the leadership of Chairman Lowell Milken, the Milken Family Foundation has become one of the most innovative private foundations in the United States, creating national programs in K–12 education and medical research as well as funding and working with more than 1,000 organizations around the world committed to the interests of young people. Today, its two most acclaimed programs in K–12 education are the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards Program and the Teacher Advancement Program. The annual Milken National Educator Awards, launched in 1987, is the nation's largest teacher recognition program, having recognized nearly 2,000 distinguished educators in 46 states with individual unrestricted awards of \$25,000.

The Teacher Advancement Program, introduced in 1999, is a comprehensive, research-based school improvement model designed to attract, retain, and motivate the best talent to and in the teaching profession by changing the structure of the profession while retaining its essence. TAP encourages teachers to grow and allows them to prosper by providing career advancement, competitive compen-

sation, ongoing, applied professional growth, and performance-based accountability. The TAP model is currently active in dozens of schools across the country.

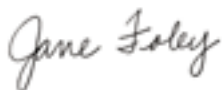
For additional information on the various initiatives of the Milken Family Foundation, visit [www.mff.org](http://www.mff.org).

## About the Project

In spring 2002, Mona Golabek came to the Milken Family Foundation with her dream of making the historic and heroic tale of her mother, Lisa Jura, a timeless classic for young people. We agreed that Lisa Jura's struggle to triumph over tragedy and the broader survival of the human spirit in the face of evil made *The Children of Willesden Lane* a rich resource for learning and exploration. In order to assess the book's relevancy for classroom use, the Milken Family Foundation asked a cross-section of Milken National Educators to provide feedback. These experts overwhelmingly recommended that the book be used in middle and high schools as a curriculum resource for English, social studies, music, and interdisciplinary studies. Confident of the book's potential to impact an ever-widening circle of students, the Foundation commissioned Facing History and Ourselves to develop this interdisciplinary study guide to support its use in classrooms across America. Additionally, to reinforce the musical selections in the book, the Foundation funded the production of the companion CD performed by Grammy-nominated Mona Golabek.

The Milken Family Foundation is pleased to partner with Mona Golabek and Facing History to present this unique curricular resource. The study guide and CD are available free-of-charge on the Foundation and Facing History websites. You may also contact Mona Golabek's non-profit foundation, Hold On To Your Music, at [holdon2yourmusic@aol.com](mailto:holdon2yourmusic@aol.com) for information on a national plan to provide copies of the books to schools for free or reduced rates.

Now it is time for teachers and students to read this courageous and uplifting story, to listen to Mona Golabek play the music that inspired her mother, and to embrace the important life lessons reinforced throughout the study guide.



Jane Foley, Ph.D.  
Senior Vice President, Milken Educator Awards  
Milken Family Foundation

# Foreword

For over a quarter of a century, Facing History and Ourselves has provided teachers and their students with a study of history and human behavior that is linked to the moral questions central to our world today. It is a study that encourages questions, fosters curiosity, and promotes democratic values and beliefs. Independent evaluations testify to the power of that learning. So do many young people. They tell us that Facing History has helped them become more caring and compassionate, more thoughtful as decision-makers, more respectful of differences, and more aware that their choices matter. Facing History students take themselves seriously as members of a community, as citizens of a nation, and as actors in an increasingly interdependent world.

How does Facing History foster such deep learning? How does it inspire students to go beyond easy answers and simplistic comparisons? How does it spark the belief that we as individuals and as members of various groups can make a positive difference in the world? One way of educating students and their teachers is by bringing resources like *The Children of Willesden Lane* to classrooms across the country and around the world. Mona Golabek's account of her mother's experiences during the Holocaust and the music she uses to deepen and enrich that story bring the past to life. Students quickly discover that this is not a Jewish story or a German story but a human story—one that we can all relate to. The book explores such themes as identity, belonging, courage, and memory.

The word *educate* comes from the Latin *educere*, which means “to lead, to draw out, to bring forth” and, by extension, “to rear, nurture, and foster growth.” Herbert Kohl says of these definitions of the word, “It is in this original sense, of one who draws young people out into encounters with what they do not yet know, while honoring what they do know, that I define myself as a teacher. For me, to be a teacher means to help students move toward a larger and continually expanding encounter with knowledge and experience, while also celebrating what they already know.”\*

That view of a teacher's role is at the heart of the work that Facing History and Ourselves does, and it is reflected in this Teacher's Resource. Like all of the materials we create, it seeks to “help students move toward a larger and continually expanding encounter with knowledge and experience, while also celebrating what they already know.”



Margot Stern Strom  
Executive Director  
Facing History and Ourselves

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\* *The Discipline of Hope: Learning from a Lifetime of Teaching* by Herbert Kohl. Simon & Schuster, 1998, pp. 13–14.

## About Facing History and Ourselves

Facing History and Ourselves is a nonprofit educational organization whose mission is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in order to promote a more humane and informed citizenry. As the name Facing History and Ourselves implies, the organization helps teachers and their students make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives by examining the development and lessons of the Holocaust and other examples of genocide. It is a study that helps young people think critically about their own behavior and the effect that their actions have on their community, nation, and the world. It is based on the belief that no classroom should exist in isolation. Facing History programs and materials involve the entire community: students, parents, teachers, civic leaders, and other citizens.

Founded in 1976 in Brookline, Massachusetts, Facing History has evolved from an innovative course taught in local middle schools to an international organization that serves communities throughout the United States and abroad. Through the work of over 100 staff members at the main office in Greater Boston and regional offices in Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Memphis, New York City, the San Francisco Bay area, and Switzerland, more than 17,000 educators around the world have participated in a Facing History workshop or institute. Each year, those teachers reach an estimated 1.5 million middle and high school students with important lessons about the dangers of prejudice and the power of civic participation. Increasingly, many people are learning about the work of Facing History and exploring its resources at [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org). Last year, the site received 16 million hits by visitors from all over the world.

Facing History and Ourselves offers educators a variety of professional development opportunities, including:

- week-long introductory institutes and one- or two-day introductory workshops;
- full-day and after-school workshops that focus on particular themes and resources;
- individual consultations on curriculum planning and classroom concerns;
- a lending library of print and audio-visual materials and access to speakers to enhance classroom instruction;
- community events that provide opportunities for adults and students to reflect on themes and issues that are relevant to the program;
- [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org), a content-rich website, and its online Campus, a password-protected section where teachers can share resources, exchange ideas, plan lessons, and download study guides and other resource materials;
- online forums and human rights conferences that engage teachers, students, and community members in discussions with leading scholars about current events, historical legacies, and themes that resonate in the world today.

## Introduction to *The Children of Willesden Lane*

In early 1938, Lisa Jura, a young Jewish girl in Vienna, dreamed that one day she would become a concert pianist. In March, her dreams were shattered. German troops took over Austria, her homeland. She became a refugee, one of about 10,000 children brought to England before World War II as part of the *Kindertransport*—a mission to rescue children threatened by the Nazis. Her daughter Mona Golabek and poet Lee Cohen tell her story in *The Children of Willesden Lane*. A companion CD highlights the music that played such an important role in Lisa Jura's life. This Teacher's Resource is designed to deepen and enrich students' understanding of both the book and the CD.



### About the Book and the Author

*The Children of Willesden Lane* opens soon after the Nazis turned Austria into a place where Jews were regarded as outcasts and then moves to England where Lisa Jura (pronounced *Yura*) lived in a home for young refugees. Mona Golabek describes how she came to tell her mother's story:

*"Hold onto your music. It will be your best friend in life."*

*As long as I can remember, these precious words have accompanied my journey through life. They are the last words spoken by my grandmother to my beloved mother, Lisa, at the Vienna train station in 1938 as hundreds of crying children said their good-byes forever to their parents and boarded the Kindertransport to escape persecution by the Nazis.*

*My mother started teaching me the piano when I was four years old. She told me fantastic tales of that journey from old-world Vienna to a rambling orphanage at 243 Willesden Lane in London. She spoke about mysterious individuals like Aaron, Johnny "King Kong," and a Mrs. Cohen who became a mother to thirty orphans, and Hans, the blind boy who waited faithfully each day for her in the basement of the hostel where she practiced the piano as the Blitz ravaged London.*

*I became a concert pianist because of those words and stories, and because of my mother's passionate connection to music. Every piano lesson with her was a lesson about life, about love, and about faith.*

*Twenty years ago, my mother was finally able to show me the photograph that my grandmother had given to her that fateful day at the train station. On the back in shaky handwriting was written the following: "So that you will never forget your mother. . . ." I was so overwhelmed by the love my grandmother showed in sending her daughter away, losing her forever to save her, that I vowed to share this story with the world.*

*I hope the strength and joie de vivre my mother showed as a teenager, studying at the London Royal Academy of Music, playing the piano for the soldiers, and ultimately facing the terrible truth of the Holocaust, will be an inspiration for everyone.*

### Companion CD to *The Children of Willesden Lane*

On a companion CD, concert pianist Mona Golabek introduces the music that is central to her mother's story. The CD is divided into three parts. On tracks 1–11, Golabek places the music in a historical context and then plays a brief portion of each selection. The exception is track 10, which features a recording Lisa Jura made in 1944. In Part 2 of the CD, tracks 12–21, each selection is



played in its entirety. The third and final part of the CD is entitled *Legacies (Tracks 22–25)*. Two of Lisa Jura’s granddaughters, Michele and Sara Golabek-Goldman, play “Clair de Lune” and “Rhapsody” at a gathering in London in June 1999, to mark the 60th anniversary of the *Kindertransport*. The girls’ mother, Renée Golabek-Kaye, performs Prelude in B Minor by Abram Chasins. The concert, which was aired live by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), was the family’s way of thanking the British people for their kindnesses to Lisa Jura.

Activities and discussion ideas that relate to the music heard on the CD may be found in this Teacher’s Resource on the pages provided in column 4 of the following chart.

Title	Composer	Tracks	Page
Piano Concerto in A Minor for Piano and Orchestra (First Movement)	Edvard H. Grieg	1 and 12	25, 43
“Moonlight” Sonata (First Movement)	Ludwig van Beethoven	2 and 13	25
Prelude in E Minor	Frederic Chopin	3 and 14	25
“Clair de Lune”	Claude Debussy	4, 5, and 15	25
Nocturne in B-flat Major, Opus 9, Number 3	Frederic Chopin	6 and 16	28
Sonata in B-flat Minor (Last Movement)	Frederic Chopin	7 and 17	28
Piano Concerto in A Minor	Edvard H. Grieg	8 and 18	34
Piano Sonata in C Minor, “Pathétique”	Ludwig van Beethoven	9 and 19	37
“Liebesträume”	Franz Liszt	10 and 20	41
Prelude in C-sharp Minor	Sergei Rachmaninoff	11 and 21	43
“Clair de Lune”	Claude Debussy	23	44
“Rhapsody”	Maxwell Eckstein	23	44
Prelude in B Minor	Abram Chasins	25	44

### Teacher’s Resource

The Teacher’s Resource provides a meaningful but flexible structure for examining the story Mona Golabek tells and relating it to historical and current events. It is designed for use with middle and high school students in English, social studies, music, and/or interdisciplinary studies.

**Introduction** to *The Children of Willesden Lane* provides teachers with background information on the book, the author, the CD, and the organization of the Teacher’s Resource. **Historical Context** relates Lisa Jura’s story to the larger events of her day. It is designed to help teachers and students

place Jura's experiences within the context of the Holocaust and World War II. The section entitled **Pre-Reading Activities** offers teachers a variety of strategies for preparing their students for reading *The Children of Willesden Lane*. This section also contains several reproducibles that may be useful to students throughout their reading of the book. **Related Resources** identifies some of the books, videos, and other materials that can be used to extend and enrich ideas and themes developed in *The Children of Willesden Lane*.

The Teacher's Resource is then divided into seven readings or parts. Each represents two or more days of class work, depending on course objectives and student interest. For the most part, each reading includes:

**Overview:** A brief summary of the reading.

**Suggestions for Discussion:** Questions that foster critical analysis, widen perspectives, and deepen comprehension. These activities build the reading, speaking, listening, and critical thinking skills that are central to educational standards.

**Activities:** One or more interactive strategies that develop key concepts and reinforce literacy, critical thinking, and social skills.

**Ideas for Writing:** Activities that help students develop their writing skills. Included are suggestions for journal writing. Many teachers encourage their students to keep a journal by setting aside a few minutes each day for students to write. A journal should be a safe space for expressing thoughts and feelings as well as a starting point for essays, poetry, or artwork.

**Interdisciplinary Ideas:** Suggestions for using the CD that accompanies *The Children of Willesden Lane*. Many promote understanding of the role of artists in building and sustaining a community.

**Historical Sidelights:** Anecdotes that deepen understanding of the ideas expressed in the book.

Reading 7 contains suggestions for **Final Projects**, useful in assessment and evaluation of student progress. Many teachers will prefer to assign these projects as their students read the book.

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## Historical Context

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*The Children of Willesden Lane* opens in Vienna, Austria, in 1938—a place and time when it was increasingly dangerous to be a Jew. That year Adolf Hitler and his Nazi party took over Austria. As in Germany, they replaced a democratic government with a dictatorship based on racism and terror. Jews were among the first targets of the new regime. Within weeks of taking over the nation, the Nazis were humiliating and isolating Jews. Some Jews feared the next step would be annihilation.

### Race and Antisemitism

Hitler's antisemitic policies encountered little opposition in Austria and Germany. As many historians have noted, everything Hitler did followed logically from racial doctrines in which most Europeans vaguely believed. Anti-Judaism had long been part of life in Europe.

Wilhelm Marr, a German journalist, coined the word *antisemitism* in 1879 to describe the hatred of Jews as members of a separate and dangerous “race.” The term combined older stereotypes about Jews and Judaism with the racist thinking of the 19th century. In earlier times, Jews were hated because they refused to accept the religion of the majority. Jews who converted, or so the reasoning went, were no longer outsiders. They belonged. By the late 1800s, racists saw every Jew regardless of his or her religious beliefs as an outsider, because conversion does not alter one's race. Today most scholars regard “race” as a meaningless scientific concept; human beings, regardless of their so-called race, are more genetically alike than different. Genetic differences within “races” are greater than those between the “races.”

In the 1800s, the few scientists who tried to show the flaws in racist thinking were ignored. For example, after studying seven million Jewish and Aryan children, the German Anthropological Society concluded in 1886 that the two groups were more alike than different. Historian George Mosse writes: “This survey should have ended controversies about the existence of pure Aryans and Jews. However, it seems to have had surprisingly little impact. The idea of race had been infused with myths, stereotypes, and subjectivities long ago, and a scientific survey could change little. The idea of pure, superior races and the concept of a racial enemy solved too many pressing problems to be easily discarded.”<sup>1</sup>

### Hitler's Rise to Power

In the early 1930s, a worldwide depression intensified feelings against Jews and other minorities. A depression is a time when economic activity slows as more and more businesses decrease production and lay off workers. It was a time of stress and uncertainty. In such times, many people are attracted to simple answers to complex problems. Antisemitism and other forms of racism intensify, as often “they” —Jews and other minorities—are blamed for the crisis.

In Germany, the myth that Jews were responsible for all of the nation's problems was fostered by groups like Adolf Hitler's National Socialist, or Nazi, party. In speech after speech, they maintained that the Jews were everywhere, controlled everything, and acted so secretly that few could detect their influence. The charge was absurd, but after hearing it again and again, most came to believe it.

In 1933, the Nazis took control of Germany after winning more seats in the *Reichstag*, Germany's parliament, than any other political party. Once in power, they began to turn Germany into a "racial state" by eliminating the nation's "racial enemies"—particularly, the Jews. Hitler proclaimed 42 anti-Jewish measures in 1933 and 19 more in 1934. Each was designed to protect "Aryan blood" from contamination with "Jewish blood." Then in 1935, three new laws were announced in Nuremberg. These laws stripped Jews of citizenship and isolated them from other Germans by outlawing marriages between Jews and citizens of Germany.

The Nuremberg laws raised an important question: Who is a Jew? On November 14, 1935, the Nazis defined a Jew as a person with two Jewish parents or three Jewish grandparents. Children of intermarriage were considered Jewish if they followed the Jewish religion or were married to a Jew. They were also Jews if they had one parent who was a practicing Jew. In the years that followed, the Nazis would apply these racial laws to not only Jews but also "Gypsies" and Germans of African descent. Increasingly they defined people solely by their ancestry.

### **German Expansion and Antisemitism**

By 1938, Hitler and his Nazi party had been in power for five years. During those years, they carried out their vision of a racial state, step by step. If a measure encountered little or no opposition, they went a little further next time. They advanced their plans for a new German empire in a similar way. On March 11, 1938, German troops entered Austria, the country of Hitler's birth. When no one protested the invasion, the Nazis turned their attention to Czechoslovakia. That fall, they took over parts of the country. In their newly acquired territories, the Nazis quickly applied their racial laws.

Jews in Greater Germany tried desperately to emigrate only to encounter stumbling blocks. The Nazis did not stand in their way. They were happy to let the Jews go as long as they left behind their money and possessions. Few nations, however, were willing to admit penniless refugees.

### ***Kristallnacht*: A Turning Point**

In the fall of 1938, many Europeans and Americans discovered how desperate the situation was for Jews in Greater Germany. In October, Hitler announced plans to expel all Jews who were technically citizens of another country. Those who held Russian passports were the first to go. Fearing that the 70,000 Polish Jews in Greater Germany would be next, the Polish government required each to have a special stamp on their passport. Yet when Polish Jews tried to secure the stamp, they were turned away. The crisis came to a head when Poland announced that it would not issue stamps after October 31. On October 26, the Nazis responded by expelling all Polish Jews. When Poland refused to accept them, thousands ended



During Kristallnacht the Nazis destroyed stores and shops owned by Jews.

up in refugee camps along the border. Among them were the parents of Herschel Grynszpan, a 17-year-old living in France.

Angry and frustrated by his inability to help his family, Grynszpan marched into the German Embassy in Paris on November 7 and shot a Nazi official. When the man died two days later, the Nazis decided to avenge his death. That night they looted and then destroyed thousands of Jewish homes and businesses in Germany and Austria. They set fire to 191 synagogues, killed over 90 Jews, and sent 30,000 others to concentration camps—prison camps for civilians. The night of November 9–10 came to be known as *Kristallnacht*, the “night of broken glass.” The German press described the riots as the “spontaneous reaction” of the German people to the murder of an official by a Jew. It was in fact carefully planned. A set of instructions issued by the government included a list of which buildings would be allowed to burn. Two days after the violence, the government fined the Jewish community one billion marks for “property damaged in the rioting.”

### ***The Kindertransport***

People around the world were outraged by the events of *Kristallnacht*, but only a few were willing to offer Jewish refugees a safe haven. Among them were a number of Jews and Christians in Britain and Nazi-occupied Europe. These men and women decided to focus their efforts on children under the age of seventeen, because they feared the British would see adults as competitors for jobs, housing, and social services. To counter the argument that the children would be a burden on taxpayers, they promised government officials that private citizens and/or organizations would pay for each child’s care, education, and his or her eventual return home. In return, Britain permitted unaccompanied refugee children to enter the country. Once World War II began, the British banned all further immigration from Nazi-occupied countries.



Jewish children from Germany on a Kindertransport.

The first *Kindertransport*, or children’s transport, from Germany arrived in England on December 2, 1938. The last transport from Germany left on September 1, 1939, just hours before World War II began in Europe. In all, the operation saved nearly 10,000 children, about 7,500 of whom were Jewish. Statistics reveal the importance of the effort. Over 1.5 million Jewish children were murdered in the ghettos and death camps of Nazi-occupied Europe. Their deaths were part of what has become known as the *Holocaust*, a Greek word that means “complete destruction by fire.” Between 1933 and 1945, Adolf Hitler and his followers murdered about one-third of all the Jews in the world. Young and old alike were killed solely because of their ancestry. The vast majority of children on the *Kindertransports* were to be the only survivors in their family.

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1. *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* by George Mosse. Fertig, 1978, p. 92.

## Pre-Reading Activities

The following suggestions are pre-reading activities. The first two relate key concepts and themes in the book to students' own experiences. The third places the book in a historical context.

### Outlining a “Universe of Obligation”

What prompts some individuals and groups to help others in a time of crisis while others turn away? That question is central to an understanding of the story told in *The Children of Willesden Lane*. One way to explore that question is by discussing what it means to be a part of a community or a nation. How is membership determined? What does it mean to belong? What is an *outsider*? An *outcast*? How are the two words alike? What is the difference between an outsider and an outcast? Who decides whether a person or group is considered one or the other?

After students have shared their ideas, you may wish to read aloud the brief essay below by Eve Shalen, a Chicago high-school student in the early 1990s. It explores the consequences of the ways she and her classmates defined membership and belonging. (A video of Shalen reading the essay is available from the regional offices of Facing History and its national Resource Center.)

*My eighth grade consisted of 28 students, most of whom knew each other from the age of five or six. The class was close-knit and we knew each other so well that most of us could distinguish each other's handwriting at a glance. Although we grew up together, we still had class outcasts. From second grade on, a small elite group spent a large portion of their time harassing two or three of the others. I was one of those two or three, though I didn't know why. In most cases when children get picked on, they aren't good at sports or they read too much or they wear the wrong clothes or they are of a different race. But in my class, we all read too much and didn't know how to play sports. We had also been brought up to carefully respect each other's races. This is what was so strange about my situation. Usually, people are made outcasts because they are in some way different from the larger group. But in my class, large differences did not exist. It was as if the outcasts were invented by the group out of a need for them. Differences between us did not cause hatred; hatred caused differences between us. The harassment was subtle. It came in the form of muffled giggles when I talked, and rolled eyes when I turned around. If I was out in the playground and approached a group of people, they often fell silent. Sometimes someone would not see me coming and I would catch the tail end of a joke at my expense.*

*I also have a memory of a different kind. There was another girl in our class who was perhaps even more rejected than I. She also tried harder than I did for acceptance, providing the group with ample material for jokes. One day during lunch I was sitting outside watching a basketball game. One of the popular girls in the class came up to me to show me something she said I wouldn't want to miss. We walked to a corner of the playground where a group of three or four sat. One of them read aloud from a small book, which I was told was the girl's diary. I sat down and, laughing till my sides hurt, heard my voice finally blend with the others. Looking back, I wonder how I could have participated in mocking this girl when I knew perfectly well what it felt like to be mocked myself. I would like to say that if I were in that situation today I would react differently, but I can't honestly be sure. Often being accepted by others is more satis-*

*fying than being accepted by oneself, even though the satisfaction does not last. Too often our actions are determined by the moment.*<sup>2</sup>

Sociologist Helen Fein writes that we as individuals and as members of groups have a “universe of obligation.” She defines that universe as the individuals and groups “toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for amends.”<sup>3</sup> Invite the class to examine Eve Shalen’s universe of obligation by drawing two concentric circles on the chalkboard. In the smaller circle, write Eve’s name. Discuss who seems to be part of her universe of obligation. Then consider whom she sees as outside that universe. Write the names of those who belong in the circle that surrounds Eve’s name. Place the names of those she viewed as outcasts outside that circle. The diagram may be used to discuss the consequences of the way she defined her universe of obligation. Why does the way she defined it when she was in middle school still trouble her?

You may wish to have students draw a similar diagram of their own universe of obligation. Do not ask students to list those who are beyond their universe of obligation, but have them think silently about those individuals or groups. Once students have completed their diagrams, encourage them to reflect on the consequences of the way they define their universe of obligation. Explain that in *The Children of Willesden Lane*, the various ways individuals and groups defined their universe of obligations often had serious consequences.

## **Defining the Word *Refugee***

*The Children of Willesden Lane* describes the experiences of a young refugee during World War II. Encourage students to build a working definition of the term. A working definition is one that builds to encompass more and more information. Students might begin by explaining what the word *refugee* means to them. How is a refugee like an immigrant? What is the main difference between the meanings of the two words?<sup>4</sup>

Dictionaries usually define an *immigrant* as an individual who settles in a foreign country. They define a *refugee* as someone who flees his or her homeland in fear of persecution and therefore cannot safely return home. David M. Donahue and Nancy Flowers of the Amnesty International Human Rights Education Steering Committee offer a more detailed definition based on recent U.S. law and various resolutions passed by the United Nations:

*A refugee is defined by the U.S. Refugee Act of 1980 and the United Nations as a person who leaves his or her country of origin because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.*

When a foreign government acknowledges that a person has left his or her country because of a “well founded fear of persecution,” that government may grant the individual political asylum or refugee status. Political asylum is defined as “legal permission to live in a country because of the danger of persecution to an individual or group of individuals in their homeland.” A person who seeks safety in a foreign country from danger at home is sometimes called an asylum seeker.

Discussions about the status of refugees today may be a sensitive topic in some schools. If appropriate, ask students what challenges refugees face in the world today. Encourage students to draw on their own experiences or those of people they know or have read about. Explain that refugees have

more protection today than they did during World War II. In fact, the plight of refugees at that time led to new laws after the war. At the same time, the experience of being an outsider has changed very little over the years. For more information on U.S. immigration policies in the 1930s and 1940s, see the Facing History study guide to *America and the Holocaust* (PBS, 81 minutes).

Reproducible 1 contains a poem written by an anonymous refugee. Invite a volunteer to read the poem. Ask students to underline the key word or words in each stanza. Then ask them to use those words to explain what the poem means. What does it mean to “survive alone”? To be “cast out”? To be “branded”? To see oneself as “a ghost adrift without identity”? To gain further insights into the difficulties refugees face, share with the class the following stanza from a poem written by a young refugee from Cambodia. It is entitled “You Have to Live in Somebody’s Else’s Country to Understand.”

*What is it like to be an outsider?  
What is it like to sit in the class where everyone has blond hair and you have black hair?  
What is it like when the teacher says, “Whoever wasn’t born here raise your hand.”  
And you are the only one.  
Then, when you raise your hand, everybody looks at you and makes fun of you.  
You have to live in somebody else’s country to understand.<sup>5</sup>*

## Stepping Back in Time

*The Children of Willesden Lane* is about a Jewish girl who survived the Holocaust. To provide students with a context for the book, you may wish to show the first 20 minutes of the video *Survivors of the Holocaust* (TBS, 60 min., color; available from Facing History and Ourselves). The documentary draws on the experiences of young Jews in Europe before, during, and immediately after World War II. Produced by Steven Spielberg, it conveys both the diversity of survivor experiences and the enormity of the Holocaust.

To focus more directly on the experiences of children on the *Kindertransport*, you may prefer to have students watch the first 20 minutes of *Into the Arms of Strangers* (Time/Warner, 118 min., color, available from Facing History). In this part of the documentary, survivors of the *Kindertransport* recall their lives before Hitler came to power. They also describe the difficulties of emigration and the violence of *Kristallnacht*. Either video can be used to expand on what it means to be seen as outcasts—people who are not part of a nation’s universe of obligation.

You may also wish to share the material provided in *About the Book and the Author* on page 8. As students begin to read, encourage them use the *Timeline of the Holocaust* (Reproducible 2) to keep track of events in the book. They might create a similar timeline for Lisa Jura as they read so that they can relate the large events of the day to her life. Students should also be encouraged to use the *Map of Europe* (Reproducible 3) to place events in a geographical context.

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2. Eve Shalen, *A Discussion with Elie Wiesel: Facing History Students Confront Hatred and Violence*. Facing History and Ourselves, 1993.
  3. Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*. Free Press, 1979, p. 4.
  4. Adapted from a lesson created by Yvonne Caamal Canul, a Milken Educator Award recipient.
  5. “You Have to Live in Somebody Else’s Country to Understand” by Noy Chou. In *A World of Difference Resource Guide*. Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith and Facing History and Ourselves, 1986.



## Cast Out

“Cast Out” was written by a young refugee who came to England on a *Kindertransport*. His or her name is unknown.

*Sometimes I think it would have been  
easier for me to die  
together with my parents than  
to have been surrendered by  
them to survive alone*

*Sometimes it does not seem that they  
spared me the hardest Jewish fate  
since by sending me away  
they burdened me and cast me out  
and none suggested I should stay*

*When the Jews were branded there  
was one number meant for me  
that another had to bear  
my perennial agony  
is the brunt of my despair*

*Sometimes I feel I am a ghost  
adrift without identity  
what as a child I valued most  
forever has escaped from me  
I have been cast out and am lost*



Group portrait of Jewish refugee girls from Germany who came to England on a Kinderstransport.

From *We Came as Children: A Collective Autobiography*. Edited by Karen Gershon. Harcourt Brace, 1966.

## Timeline of the Holocaust

Entries in italics refer to events described or alluded to in *The Children of Willesden Lane*.

<i>1933</i>	<i>19—</i>	The Nazi party wins power in Germany after gaining the most votes in parliamentary elections. Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor, or prime minister, of Germany.
<i>1934</i>		
<i>1935</i>	<i>19-4</i>	Hitler becomes “Führer,” or leader, of Germany.
<i>1938</i>	<i>19-5</i>	Germany’s Nuremberg Laws deprive Jews of citizenship and other fundamental rights.
<i>1938</i>	<i>19-8</i>	<i>German troops annex Austria.</i>
		<i>On Kristallnacht, the night of November 9–10, Nazi gangs attack Jews throughout Germany and Austria.</i>
		<i>On December 1, the first Kindertransport departs from Berlin, Germany; 10 days later one departs from Vienna, Austria.</i>
	<i>19-9</i>	In March, Germany takes over Czechoslovakia.
		<i>On September 1, Germany invades Poland; On September 3, Britain declares war on Germany.</i>
	<i>1940</i>	Nazis begin deporting German Jews to Poland. Jews are forced into ghettos.
		<i>Germany conquers the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France.</i>
		<i>The last Kindertransport leaves the Netherlands as the Dutch surrender to German forces.</i>
		<i>The German air force begins the massive bombing of Britain known as the Blitz.</i>
	<i>1941</i>	Germany attacks the Soviet Union.
		Germany begins the systematic slaughter of Jews.
		The first death camp at Chelmno in Poland begins operations.
		After the Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor, Germany—an ally of Japan—declares war on the United States.
	<i>1942</i>	Nazi officials turn over the “Final Solution”—their plan to kill all European Jews—to the bureaucracy.
		Five death camps begin operation: Majdanek, Sobibor, Treblinka, Belzec, and Auschwitz-Birkenau.
		Allied radio broadcasts acknowledge that the Germans are systematically murdering the Jews of Europe.
	<i>1945</i>	<i>World War II ends in Europe; the Holocaust is over; one third of the world’s Jews have been murdered.</i>
	<i>1946</i>	An International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg created by Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union tries Nazi leaders for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

## Outline Map of Europe, Pre-World War II



This map shows national borders before Germany's annexation of Austria in March, 1938.

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## Related Resources

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For a fuller treatment of ideas and concepts developed in the Teacher's Resource, see Chapters 3–8 in *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior* and Facing History's website at [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org). Other materials available from Facing History and Ourselves include:

*Elements of Time*: A companion manual to the Facing History videotape collection of Holocaust testimonies—the result of a five-year collaborative project between Facing History and the Fortunoff Video Archive at Yale University made possible through the support of Eli Evans and the Charles H. Revson Foundation.

*I Promised I Would Tell*: Sonia Weitz uses poetry and diary entries to create a vivid tapestry of her childhood in Krakow, Poland, and her years in concentration camps.

### Literature

Listed below are some of the autobiographies, diaries, and anthologies that can be used to relate Lisa Jura's experiences to those of other children caught up in the Holocaust.

David, Kati. *A Child's War: World War II through the Eyes of Children*. Avon, 1989.

Frank, Anne. *The Diary of a Young Girl*. Trans. by B. M. Mooyaart. Doubleday, 1952, 1967.

Holliday, Laurel, ed. *Children in the Holocaust and World War II: Their Secret Diaries*. Pocket Books, 1995.

Isaacson, Judith. *Seed of Sarah*. University of Illinois Press, 1991. A memoir of a teenager whose comfortable life in Hungary was turned upside down by the Nazis.

Orlev, Uri. *Island on Bird Street*. Houghton, 1989. The story of a boy who hid for five months in an unnamed ghetto.

Richter, Hans Peter. *Friedrich*. Trans. by Edite Kroll. Holt, 1970; Puffin Books, 1987. Traces a friendship between a young Jew and a Christian from 1925 to 1942.

Tec, Nechama. *Dry Tears: The Story of a Lost Childhood*. Oxford, 1982, 1984. Tec explains how at the age of eleven, she learned to “pass” as a Christian in Nazi-occupied Poland.

Toll, Nelly S. *Behind the Secret Window: A Memoir of a Hidden Childhood during World War Two*. Dial, 1993.

Zapruder, Alexandra. *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust*. Yale University Press, 2002.

### Other Resources

These resources may be used to explore the setting of the book and the time in history it describes:

*Into the Arms of Strangers* (Time/Warner, 118 min., color, available from Facing History): A full-length film focuses on the experiences of some of the children on the *Kindertransports*. The mother of producer Deborah Oppenheimer was among the children saved by the *Kindertransports*. A study guide offers suggestions for dividing the film into parts for classroom use. Those parts can be correlated to readings in *The Children of Willesden Lane*.

*My Knees Were Jumping: Remembering the Kindertransport* (National Center for Jewish Film, 76 min.): Combines interviews with surviving participants, newsreel footage, and old photos.

*Survivors: Testimonies of the Holocaust* (Shoah Visual History Foundation, CD ROM): Explores the testimonies of four Holocaust survivors. Interactive features that help students place each testimony in a historical and geographical context accompany each testimony.

*Well-Founded Fear* (PBS Home Video, 108 min.): A documentary about the asylum office at the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. For the video and supporting resources, go to [www.pbs.org/pov/pov1999/wellfoundedfear/home.html](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov1999/wellfoundedfear/home.html).

For more information on refugees today, access the website of the U.S. Committee for Refugees at <http://www.refugees.org>.

For additional information on the Holocaust, the *Kindertransport*, and/or U.S. immigration policies, go to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum website [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org). Also of interest may be the website of Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation at [www.vhf.org](http://www.vhf.org).

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Reading 1: *Identity in a Time of Change* (Author's Note, Chapters 1-3)

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## Overview

As Lisa Jura, a 14-year-old Jewish girl, travels to the home of Professor Isseles for a piano lesson, she pictures herself as a concert pianist playing the opening of Grieg's piano concerto. Despite the pleasure she takes in such dreams, she is troubled by the changes she sees in Vienna, her hometown. There are suddenly German soldiers everywhere and signs warning that Jews are not welcome. Even Professor Isseles is affected by the change. After she plays for him, he sadly tells her that he can no longer give her lessons. It is now a crime for an Austrian to teach a Jewish child. "I am not a brave man," he softly says.

Lisa's mother and sisters try to ease her disappointment. Her mother, Malka, offers to be her daughter's music teacher again. Lisa's older sister Rosie tries to distract her with makeup lessons as her younger sister Sonia watches. It is a tense time for the family. Lisa's father, Abraham, who claims to be "the best tailor in all of Vienna," no longer has customers, because Austrians are not allowed to do business with a Jew.

Then comes *Kristallnacht*, the "Night of Broken Glass." On the evening of November 9–10, Sonia and Lisa are awakened by loud noises. When they look out the window, the sky is red with flames. German soldiers are throwing rocks and even flinging men into plate-glass windows. Lisa, Sonia, and their mother watch helplessly as the Nazis humiliate and then beat her father and other Jewish men in their neighborhood, burn the synagogue, and loot Jewish houses and businesses.

In the days that follow, the Nazis place more and more restrictions on Jews, mirroring many of the measures already in place in Germany.

The violence convinces Lisa's parents that they must send their children out of the country in order to protect them, but they are able to secure passage for just one child on the *Kindertransport*, an effort to rescue Jewish children by sending them to Britain. The Juras decide to send Lisa. At 20, Rosie is too old to be eligible, and the Juras consider Sonia too young to travel alone. On her day last day at home, Lisa walks through the house storing memories. One treasure she places in her pocket—a copy of "Clair de Lune" by Claude Debussy.

At the train station, Malka tells Lisa, "Remember what I've taught you. Your music will help you through—let it be your best friend, Liseleh. And remember I love you."



A woman sits on a park bench in Germany marked "Only for Aryans."

## Religious References in *The Children of Willesden Lane*

Lisa Jura and her family were observant Jews. The authors introduce a few of the practices important to their identity in the first three chapters. Brief definitions of those terms are provided. The page numbers refer to pages in *The Children of Willesden Lane*.

*Hannukah*—A Jewish holiday celebrated for eight days in December to mark the victory of the Jews in the first recorded battle for religious liberty. In 168 B.C.E. a small army of Jews led by Judah Maccabee overcame the might of their Syrian rulers in a struggle for the right to worship God in their own way. (p. 12)

*Kosher*—refers to the laws, rules, and regulations that guide which foods observant Jews may eat and how those foods may be prepared and served. (p. 14)

*Mezuzah*—A small metal or ceramic tube containing a small piece of parchment that is placed upon the doorposts in a Jewish home. A quotation from the Bible is written on the parchment. The quotation calls upon Jews to make their homes worthy of God's presence. (p. 14)

*Shabbat*—the Hebrew word for the Sabbath. Jews observe the Sabbath from sunset on Friday to nightfall on Saturday. To usher in the day, they light candles just before sunset and say the following blessing: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has hallowed us by thy commandments, and commanded us to kindle the Sabbath light." Although both men and women may light Sabbath candles, the honor traditionally falls to the women. They light at least two candles. Many women add an additional one for each of their children. Malka Jura also added a candle to honor her mother. Charity is a part of the candle-lighting ceremony in many Jewish homes. Some women set aside a little money for the poor or provide them with food from the Sabbath table before reciting the blessing. (pp. 13–14)

*Shema Yisroel*—The opening words of a prayer that religious Jews recite three times a day; it is a declaration of faith in God. (p. 16)

## Suggestions for Discussion

*Identifying the factors that shape Lisa's identity.*

- How does Lisa seem to regard her family? To whom does she seem most attached?
- How does music shape Lisa's identity?
- How important is her religion to the way Lisa defines her identity?
- Based on the author's descriptions of her, what adjectives would you use to describe Lisa? What adjectives might she use to describe herself?

*Exploring the changes that were taking place in Vienna in 1938.*

- What changes in Vienna disturb Lisa most? How do those changes affect Lisa and her family?
- How do the changes in Vienna affect Professor Isseles and other non-Jews in the country?
- In what sense is *Kristallnacht* a "wake-up call" for Lisa's family and other Austrian Jews?
- To what extent was the decision to place Lisa on the *Kindertransport* an act of desperation?

To what extent was it an act of courage? An act of faith?

*Examining the way the author tells her mother's story.*

- How do the authors introduce readers to Lisa Jura and her family?
- Why do you think the authors chose to begin the book with an account of a streetcar ride to a piano lesson? What does the trip reveal about Lisa and her life in Vienna in 1938?
- The last paragraph in a chapter often foreshadows what will happen next in the book. Based on the last paragraph in Chapter 3 (page 29), what will be the focus of the next chapter?

## **Drawing a “Universe of Obligation”**

After the Germans took over Austria, individuals and groups in the nation made important choices. Often those choices were based on the way they defined their universe of obligation—the individuals and groups “toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for amends.” Among those choices was the one Professor Isseles made (pp. 4–7). To explore why he chose to turn away a student he seemed to like and even admire, have students work with a partner to create two diagrams, one showing how the professor seemed to define his universe of obligation before the Germans arrived and the other after they took over the country.

After partners have completed their drawings, invite them to use them to analyze the decision that Professor Isseles made. Why do you think he tells Lisa that he is not “a brave man”? What might a braver person have done?

You may wish to extend the activity by relating it to current events. For example, students might be asked to create two diagrams showing how they or someone they know or have read about defined their universe of obligation before and after the events of September 11, 2001.

## **Reporting *Kristallnacht***

Newspapers around the world reported the violence of *Kristallnacht*. The story was also told on the radio. Divide students into small groups to prepare a news story about the events of *Kristallnacht* for a radio broadcast. Encourage them to tell the story from Lisa Jura's perspective. Remind them that most stories on radio, like those on TV today, run no more than two minutes. Most begin with a headline or lead sentence that tries to capture the audience's attention. Invite groups to share their stories with the class.

## **Ideas for Writing**

*A Difficult Decision*

Invite students to write a paragraph about a difficult decision they or someone they know has made. Encourage them to choose one that had an effect on at least one other person. The paragraph should describe why the decision was difficult to make, the factors they took into account in making the decision, and the effects of the decision on themselves and others. What lesson did they learn from this experience?

*Journal Suggestions*

- Write your response to the story so far. Which characters or events are most memorable?
- What did you find surprising or difficult to understand in this section of the book?



- Create a timeline of the important events in Lisa Jura’s life so far in the story. Leave space so you can add entries as you continue reading the book. Use Reproducible 2, *Timeline of the Holocaust*, as a model.
- List the changes that Lisa and her family have experienced so far in the book. Which do you think were the most difficult for Lisa to accept? For her parents? How have you coped with difficult changes in your own life?

## Interdisciplinary Ideas: Responding to the CD

On page 2, Lisa dreams that she is a concert pianist at Symphony Hall, playing the opening of the Piano Concerto in A Minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 16 by Edvard Hagerup Grieg (1843–1907). Grant Johannesen plays the opening theme of that concerto with the Utah Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Maurice Abravaneff on tracks 1 and 12 of the CD. (A *concerto* is a musical work for one or more solo instruments and orchestra. A Minor is the key in which the music was written. The word *opus* literally means a musical work. This was Grieg’s 16th published work.) Written in 1868 when the composer was just 25 years old, the concerto made him famous. Play track 1 and then discuss the mood of the piece. Why do you think Lisa made it the focus of her daydreams?

On page 6, the authors describe Lisa as she plays for Professor Isseles. Among the pieces she plays is the “Moonlight” Sonata by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827). The sonata got its name in 1832 (about 30 years after it was written), when German poet Ludwig Rellstab compared the music to “moonlight shining on a lake.” Listen for the rippling sounds of the lake as Mona Golabek plays the first movement (*Tracks 2 and 13*). Those are arpeggios like ones Lisa plays for Professor Isseles. What mood do they evoke? (A chord is three or more notes played simultaneously. When musicians play an arpeggio, they play the notes of a chord consecutively, usually in quick succession.)

When Lisa’s mother learns what happened at the piano lesson, she insists that she and Lisa play the Prelude in E Minor by Frederic Chopin (1810–1849). (Although the word *prelude* suggests an introduction to something else, Chopin’s preludes are independent, free-form thoughts—musical snapshots.) Have students listen as Mona Golabek plays the Prelude (*Tracks 3 and 14*) and then ask a volunteer to read aloud pages 9–10. Why do you think Lisa’s mother insisted that her daughter play this particular piece? What idea does it convey? What emotions does it inspire?

On her last day at home, Lisa walks through her home and memorizes the things she loved (*pages 25–26*). She picks up a copy of the sheet music for “Clair de Lune” (moonlight) by Claude Debussy (1862–1918) and puts it in her pocket. Debussy is often described as an impressionist composer because of the way he uses sounds to paint images. As students listen to “Clair de Lune” (*Tracks 4 and 15*), invite them to think about the images the piece evokes. Why do you think Lisa loved the work so much that she took the sheet music with her?

Mona Golabek plays “Clair de Lune” again (*Track 5*) as she describes Lisa’s farewell at the train station (*pages 26–29*). What does the music add to the scene?

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Reading 2: *Uprooted* (Chapters 4-8)

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## Overview

Lisa and the other children travel by train through Austria, across Germany, and then to the Hook of Holland, a Dutch port on the North Sea. There they board a boat that takes them across the English Channel to Britain and yet another train, this one to London.

The children's arrival in London brings new challenges. Lisa discovers that the cousin she hoped to stay with is unable to care for her. Workers at the Jewish Refugee Agency at Bloomsbury House and the Red Cross find her temporary housing until they can make a more permanent arrangement. Eventually Lisa is assigned to Peacock Manor near Brighton-by-the-Sea, where she works as a live-in housemaid and later as a personal maid to the lady of the manor. The work is not hard, but Lisa has promises to keep—to remember her music and reunify her family. Neither can be accomplished so far from London. So Lisa uses money saved from her wages to buy a bicycle. She then leaves the manor and rides 45 miles to the nearest railroad station where she buys a ticket to London. She goes directly to Bloomsbury House and begs the authorities to let her stay. They reluctantly agree and Lisa is assigned to 243 Willesden Lane, a hostel crammed with young refugees and led by the devoted Mrs. Cohen.



A group of Jewish children arriving from Germany.

## Suggestions for Discussion

*Exploring the emotions Lisa and the other children experience as they left Austria.*

- As the train pulls away from the station in Vienna, Michael, one of the children on the *Kindertransport*, tries unsuccessfully to engage Lisa in a conversation. Why do you think she does not respond to his overtures? How do you explain her lack of friendliness?
- On pages 32–34, the children watch silently as Nazi soldiers move through the train. Why are they so silent? What do they fear? Find other examples that offer insights into the emotions of Lisa and the other children.
- On pages 36–37, a baby in a basket is thrown aboard the train. How do the children respond? Find other examples of courage shown by Lisa and the other children.

*Exploring what Lisa means when she says, “I want to make something of myself. I don’t want to be a servant. I want to learn something.”*

- Why do you think Lisa is so determined to return to London? What are her goals?
- What does it mean to “make something of yourself”? What do you think Lisa means when

she makes this statement to Mr. Hardesty?

- How does Mr. Hardesty respond to Lisa's statement? How might an adult respond to a similar statement today?
- What does Lisa seem to like best about her new placement at 243 Willesden Lane? Why does she find it comforting to stay there?

## A Matter of Perspective

Once in Britain, Lisa and others on the *Kindertransport* had to adapt to new customs, learn a new language, and build a new life often without schooling, old friends, or family. As Lisa and the other young refugees adjusted to new circumstances, their perspective or view of the world began to change. Encourage students to work in small groups to discuss examples of the way the children's experiences were altering their perspective. After each group has shared its insights with the class, share the following passage by Isabel Allende, a Chilean writer whose perspective changed after military leaders took over her country's government in the 1970s:

*After the military coup in Chile...I started, little by little, to realize how the world was. All the violence that was always there, and I failed to see it, because I lived in a very privileged environment. In a way, we could say that many people in this country live like that. They don't realize how the world is, how big it is, how terribly painful life is in most of the world. I realized [this] in Chile after the military coup, and I think I became a better person in many aspects. I grew up very suddenly. Since then, I have the feeling that I've always been growing up. Once you start being aware, it's impossible to stop.<sup>6</sup>*

Ask students to compare and contrast Allende's comments with Lisa's reflections on her first evening at Willesden Lane (p. 78). Then invite a volunteer to reread the poem on Reproducible 1. How do the author's experiences affect his or her view of the world?

## Exploring London

As Lisa settled in London, she slowly learned her way around the city. You may find it helpful to post a roadmap of London on a bulletin board to help students explore the city along with Lisa. Ask volunteers to highlight places mentioned in each chapter. (If the roadmap is laminated, place names could be underscored with markers. If the map is paper, use push pins to highlight key locations like the Waterloo train station, Bloomsbury House, and Willesden Lane.) Encourage students to use the index to the map and clues in the book to locate each place.

## Writing Ideas

### *Mementos*

Lisa cherished the photograph of her mother she brought to England. If you had to leave your home and were allowed to only take a few items of importance with you, what do you think you would take? What is the significance of the item or items you chose? Write a paragraph describing each item and what it means to you.

## Journal Suggestions

- Continue to add important events in Lisa Jura's life to the timeline you started in the previous reading. Remember to include the small individual events as well as the larger, global events.
- Describe a time where you were separated from your family or someone you loved. How did you feel about the separation? Who helped ease your fears? What made you feel less lonely?

## Interdisciplinary Ideas: Music

### *Responding to the CD*

As Lisa travels through the Netherlands, (p. 38) the windmills remind her of a nocturne by Frederic Chopin. The word *nocturne* is derived from a word that means “night.” It is a musical composition that expresses a pensive, dreamy mood. How does Mona Golabek use the nocturne to underscore her mother's feelings as she travels further and further from home? As students listen to Golabek play Chopin's Nocturne in B-flat Major, Opus 9, Number 3, (*Tracks 6 and 16*), ask what colors describe the mood. Using the outline map of Europe (*Reproducible 3*), encourage student to trace Lisa's journey to England. Ask them to use colors to highlight her emotions at various points in the journey.

Lisa is reminded of Chopin when she imagines herself playing the piano at Peacock Manor (pp.59–60). This time, she thinks of Chopin's Sonata in B-flat Minor (*Tracks 7 and 17*). Have students listen for the sound of the wind as they listen to the sonata.

### **HISTORICAL SIDELIGHTS: A MEETING WITH THE NAZIS**

Even as the first *Kindertransport* left Germany on December 1, 1938, organizers learned that life was becoming more and more dangerous for Jewish children in other Nazi-occupied territories, including Austria. Norman Bentwich, then a professor of law at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, turned to a Dutch Christian who spoke fluent German for help. Bentwich asked Gertruida Wijismuller-Meijer, a member of the Children's Refugee Committee in the Netherlands, to travel to Austria and secure permission to bring more unaccompanied children out of the country.

Wijismuller-Meijer left for Austria so quickly that she left behind papers verifying that she was acting on behalf of the rescue committee. Even so she persuaded Adolf Eichmann, then head of the Jewish Office of the Gestapo (the German secret police), to release more children. He agreed because it furthered the Nazis' aim of making Greater Germany free of Jews.<sup>7</sup> How did Bentwich, Wijismuller-Meijer, and Eichmann each define their universe of obligation? How did that definition shape the choices each made?

6. Quoted at [www.pbs.org/pov99/well-foundedfear](http://www.pbs.org/pov99/well-foundedfear).

7. Based on an account in *Men of Vision: Anglo-Jewry's Aid to Victims of the Nazi Regime* by Amy Zahl Gottlieb. Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd., 1998.

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Reading 3: *A* Refugee in Wartime (Chapters 9-12)

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### Overview

Although Lisa now has a job in a garment factory, she has not forgotten her dream, her music, or her family. The little news that she receives from home is terrifying, and Lisa works tirelessly to bring her younger sister Sonia to Britain.

When Lisa returns from work one day, she approaches the piano in the house on Willesden Lane and quickly loses herself in her music. As the others arrive home from work or school, her playing charms them. Before long, the piano becomes a lifeline for Lisa, and the music she produces with it becomes an inspiration to the other residents.

Lisa continues to seek a sponsor for Sonia by going from house to house asking for help. Her efforts pay off when Mrs. Canfield, a neighbor, offers to find a sponsor for Sonia. Two days later, Sonia officially has a place to stay in the north of England and a seat on what is to be the last *Kindertransport* from Austria before World War II begins in Europe. The sisters have only a brief time together before Sonia is shipped to the family that sponsored her.

On September 2, 1939, Lisa and the other children of Willesden Lane huddle around the radio to listen as Prime Minister Winston Churchill declares war on Germany. Before the fighting begins in earnest, Mrs. Cohen's son Hans arrives. Lisa quickly finds that he shares her love of music.

### Suggestions for Discussion

*Exploring the differences between upstanders and bystanders.*

- In "A Problem from Hell": *America and the Age of Genocide*, journalist Samantha Power defines an individual who makes a positive difference in the life of another individual or the community as an upstander. What then is a bystander? What do bystanders and upstanders have in common? How do they differ from victims or perpetrators? What is the most striking difference between an upstander and a bystander?
- Who are the upstanders in *The Children of Willesden Lane*? How would you characterize Mrs. Cohen? Mrs. Campbell? Mr. Hardesty? To what extent did each make a positive difference? To what extent was Lisa an upstander?
- Who are the bystanders in this section of the book? How important were the choices they made?

*Evaluating the importance of unity in wartime.*

- How did the onset of war affect the children of Willesden Lane?
- How do their neighbors respond to the declaration of war? To the special needs of the children who live on Willesden Lane?
- Why do people tend to come together in time of war or other crises? What does your answer suggest about the power of a united community?

## Making a Difference

It took countless individuals and groups in Britain and other countries to bring 10,000 children from Germany, Austria, and later Czechoslovakia to safety. Upon their arrival in Britain, hundreds of others kept track of the new arrivals, found homes and sometimes jobs for them, and provided them with food and shelter. What may have motivated someone to donate money? To shelter the young refugees? To join one of the many committees that planned the operation or monitored the safety of the children once they had been placed?

Encourage students to test their ideas by examining the adults who helped Lisa and her friends. What may have prompted each of these individuals to help the young refugees? Encourage students to record their ideas in their journal. Then distribute copies of Reproducible 3.1, an essay by Trevor Chadwick, a young Londoner who brought children from Czechoslovakia to London on *Kindertransports*. Ask students to explain the last sentence in his essay.

To extend the activity, invite volunteers to find out about other rescuers. Two valuable sources are *Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust* by Gay Block and Malka Drucker (Holmes and Meier, 1992) and *The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* edited by Carol Rittner and Sondra Myers (New York University Press, 1986). Students may also be interested in learning about Irena Sendler who saved 2,500 children from the Warsaw Ghetto during World War II. Norm Conard, a Milken Educator Award recipient from Kansas, and his students researched her life. (See the Milken Family Foundation website at [www.mff.org/newsroom/news.taf?page=202](http://www.mff.org/newsroom/news.taf?page=202).)

## Writing Ideas

### Journal Suggestions

- Continue to add to the timeline of key events in Lisa's life. Remember to include the small personal events in Lisa's life as well as the larger, global events.
- How did the children of Willesden Lane respond to the declaration of war? Have you ever lived through a crisis? How did you respond? How did the people around you react? Compare and contrast your responses with those of the children of Willesden Lane.
- This part of the book describes the growing friendships among the young people at 243 Willesden Lane. Write about a close friendship that helped you get through a difficult time. Why is friendship important during such times in our lives?

### **HISTORICAL SIDELIGHTS: THE WAGNER-ROGERS BILL**

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In the early 1920s, the U.S. passed laws that strictly limited immigration. After the violence of *Kristallnacht*, Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York and Representative Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts introduced a bill that would bypass those laws to admit temporarily 20,000 Jewish children under the age of 14. The children would be allowed to stay in the country only until it was safe to return home. Various Jewish groups in the U.S. would assume the cost of sheltering them.

The bill encountered opposition from the start. Some Americans asked why it did not include Christian children from Poland or China (Japan invaded China in 1933). Others made antisemitic remarks. The bill never passed. (To learn about the bill and the way Americans responded to it, students may wish to watch the first 20 minutes of *America and the Holocaust*, PBS, 81 minutes.) How do you account for the American response?

## A Rescuer's Account

Trevor Chadwick explains what motivated him to help with the *Kindertransport*.

*In 1938 I was teaching at our family prep school. Rumors of the many distressed children in Central Europe reached us, and it was decided to adopt two, according to Home Office regulations, which required a full guarantee of care and maintenance until the age of 18; strict personal references covering the guarantor's character and solvency were also demanded. Another master at the school and I set off for Prague [Czechoslovakia] to select our pair. We did not know where to begin, and had interviews with various people. . . . Within a few days we had found a couple of small boys of about eight and ten. We got a clear impression of the enormity of the task. We so often saw halls full of confused refugees and batches of lost children, mostly Jewish, and we saw only the fringe of it all.*

*Soon after our return I felt that I had to do more about it. I went to Friends House, and later to the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany. They were busy finding guarantors, and I flew back to Prague to find children who would fit in with the guarantors' wishes. I took my first air transport rather proudly, on a twenty-seater plane. They were all cheerfully sick, enticed by the little paper bags, except a baby of one who slept peacefully in my lap the whole time. The Customs Officers were a little puzzled and began to open some of the suitcases, which contained the kids' worldly treasures. But when I explained what they meant to the children, [the officers] were completely co-operative. Then there was the meeting with the guarantors—my baby was cooed over and hustled off, and the other nineteen were shyly summing up their new parents, faces alive with hope for the love they were obviously going to be given. I felt depressed as I returned to Prague. Only twenty! This was late in the winter, early in 1939.*

*But on March 15 the air transports came to an end when the Nazis came in. By then I had a hundred or so children waiting to be sent to England. . . .*

*Attention had primarily been paid to the wishes of the guarantors. The majority stipulated girls seven to ten and if possible [blonde]. Boys of twelve and upwards were hard to place. Girls were in the majority on the transports.*

*I tried to find the most urgent helpless cases. This was not easy. Many were already refugees from Germany and Austria; many parents had "disappeared". . . . I shall always have a feeling of shame that I didn't get more out.*

From *We Came as Children: A Collective Autobiography*. Edited by Karen Gershon. Harcourt Brace, 1966, pp. 22–25.

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Reading 4: *The Blitz* (Chapters 13-16)

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### Overview

Even as the British prepare for a German invasion, Lisa continues to go to work each day, play her music, and try to stay true to her mother's wishes. Then comes the Blitz, the almost daily bombings by the Germans of London and other cities. One night, the bombs hit 243 Willesden Lane. The building is so damaged that the children must find temporary placements until repairs are made. Lisa stays with Mrs. Canfield down the street.

Soon after repairs are made to 243 Willesden Lane and Lisa and the other children move back, Mrs. Cohen approaches Lisa with an idea that will change her life forever. Mrs. Cohen reads in the newspaper about an audition for scholarships to the London Royal Academy of Music. She suggests that Lisa apply. Lisa agrees, thrilled at the possibilities. Yet that very evening, she and the other children hear disturbing news about the fate of their families from a rabbi. A cousin in Mexico also sends Lisa unsettling news about her older sister Rosie and her fiancé, Leo. According to the cousin, the pair managed to reach Paris, but no one has heard from them since their arrival.



London after the Blitz, May 11, 1941.

### Suggestions for Discussion

*Examining how one's identity shapes the way he or she responds to a crisis.*

- Soon after the war began, Lisa, Gina, Gunter and Aaron ask Mr. Hardesty at the Bloomsbury House for news of their families. Frustrated at receiving so little news, Aaron angrily asks as he walked away, "Why would he care, anyway? He's not Jewish!" What do you think Aaron was implying? How do you like to think you would have responded to Aaron's remarks?
- When Lisa asked her sister Sonia to write to her in German rather than in her newly learned English, Sonia replied, "I promised to never speak the words of Hitler." What do you think Sonia was trying to tell her sister? How do you think you might have replied to her remark?

*Exploring the way a nation defines its identity at a time of crisis.*

- What is patriotism? How do you account for the rise in British patriotism among the residents of Willesden Lane?
- Although Lisa observes that the British seem taken over by a wave of "super-patriotism" following the British boatlift at Dunkirk, she expresses her own pride in their accomplishment. Why do such displays of patriotism give her hope?



*Exploring the meaning of the word resilience.*

- What does the word *resilience* mean? Identify examples of resilience during the Blitz.
- When Lisa arrived at work after a night of heavy bombing by the Germans, she was amazed to find all of her fellow workers were on the job. How do you account for her reaction to their courage? What does it suggest about the way we garner hope from classmates, relatives, friends, and co-workers?

*Explore the meaning of the word resistance.*

- What does it mean to resist? Identify examples of resistance during the Blitz.
- Mrs. Canfield shows Lisa letters from fellow Quakers in Germany who respond to the Nazi greeting “Heil Hitler” with “Gruss Gott,” meaning “Greet God.” Lisa learns that this simple act has led to the arrest of several Quakers. (The Quakers are members of the Religious Society of Friends, a Christian group who believe in the presence of God within each person and emphasize a personal commitment to God and humanitarian causes.) Why do you think the Nazis regarded this traditional greeting as a threat? To what extent were the Quakers resisting the Nazis?

#### **HISTORICAL SIDELIGHTS: THE RESCUE AT DUNKIRK**

In May 1940, 300,000 British and French soldiers were squeezed into an area seven miles wide near the French port of Dunkirk. With their backs to the beach and the Germans advancing, the men lacked the arms and air support necessary to win the battle and yet could not retreat because the British Navy did not have enough vessels to evacuate them. So a call went out to every boater, fisherman, and sailor in Britain. In just nine days, thousands donated their motorboats, ocean liners, fishing boats, tankers, trawlers, even lifeboats for an amazing rescue operation. Although navy officers took charge of most of the boats, civilians, eager to help, piloted many others. Together, they saved nearly every soldier on the beach. Leaders and ordinary citizens alike hailed the effort as one of the greatest rescues in history. Why do you think the British viewed the boatlift as their “finest hour”? How did it inspire hope at a time when the Germans seemed to be winning the war?

## Fears in Time of War

After France fell to the Germans in the summer of 1940, the British became increasingly anxious about the possibility of a German invasion. Those fears led the government to imprison about 27,000 “enemy aliens,” including Jewish refugees, who ironically had the most reason to fight against Nazi Germany. The policy was motivated by the desire to control potentially dangerous enemies. Among those arrested was Gunter. A seatmate on the bus saw him writing in German and reported him as a spy. Discuss the part that fear played in the ways the British responded to Gunter and other refugees.

Invite volunteers to research similar responses in other countries and at other times in history. For example, how were the responses of the British to German refugees similar to the way the United States government responded to Japanese Americans during World War II? To the ways people in the United States and other countries responded to individuals who looked “Middle Eastern” after September 11, 2001? What differences and similarities seem most striking?

## Writing Ideas

### *Poetry as Witness*

Music is one way of expressing emotion. Poetry is another. As Bertolt Brecht once wrote:

*In the dark times, will there also be singing?  
Yes, there will be singing.  
About the dark times.<sup>8</sup>*

Remind students that Johnny, one of young refugees who lived at Willesden Lane, uses poetry to express his feelings. Ask a volunteer to read aloud his poem (pp. 131–132). What emotions does it evoke? Invite students to write a poem that expresses how they felt at a difficult time in their own life or the life of their family, community, or the nation. Encourage them to share their writing with a partner or the class as a whole.

## Journal Suggestions

- Continue to add to your timeline of Lisa Jura’s life. Include the major developments in the war as well as the changes in the lives of the children at Willesden Lane.
- Was there anything new, surprising or challenging about this section of the book?
- Describe a time when you or someone you know showed resilience?

## Interdisciplinary Ideas: Music

### *Responding to the CD*

Mona Golabek plays the cadenza of Grieg’s Piano Concerto in A Minor on the CD (*Tracks 8 and 18*)—the same concerto that her mother played during the Blitz (p. 142). A *cadenza* is a passage that allows a soloist to shine while the orchestra remains silent. Why do you think Lisa chose to play a cadenza in the middle of a bombing raid?

## HISTORICAL SIDELIGHTS: THE BLITZ

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The German bombers that suddenly appeared in the skies over London on the afternoon of September 7, 1940, marked a shift in the Nazis' military strategy. In July and August, they had targeted airfields and radar stations in preparation for an invasion of the island. Hitler now decided to bomb civilian targets in the hopes of demoralizing the British. At around 4:00 pm that day, 348 German bombers, escorted by 617 fighters, blasted London for two straight hours. After a two-hour break, another group of bombers began an attack that lasted until 4:30 the following morning.



Newgate Street in London, December 29, 1940.

The attack marked the beginning of the Blitz—the English abbreviation of the German word *blitzkrieg*, which means “lightning war.” The bombing continued day in, day out until May 1941, when Hitler called off the raids to prepare for the invasion of Russia. In London, fires consumed portions of the city and residents sought shelter wherever they could find it. Over 175,000 people a night used the Underground, London’s subway, as a bomb shelter. In the worst single incident during the Blitz, 450 people were killed when a bomb hit a school used as an air raid shelter.<sup>9</sup> Why do you think the Blitz had an effect that was almost directly opposite to the one Hitler expected? What did he fail to understand about the British people?

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8. From “To Those Born Later” by Bertolt Brecht in *Bertolt Brecht: Poems 1913-1956*. Frans. by John Willett, Ralph Manheim, and Erich Fried. Methuen, 1980

9. <http://www.ibiscom.com/blitz.htm>

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## Reading 5: *The Audition* (Chapters 17-19)

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### Overview

When Lisa discovers that she must pay a small fee in order to audition at the Royal Academy, Mrs. Cohen tries to raise the money. The first person she approaches is Mr. Hardesty of Bloomsbury House. At first, he is reluctant to help, but after secretly listening to Lisa playing a Grieg piano concerto, he pays the entire fee. The next day Lisa travels to the Royal Academy to pick up an application. She also arranges to leave work early so she can practice a few extra hours. Buoyed by a first romance, the support of her co-workers at the factory, and her friends at Willesden Lane, she not only rehearses the music of Bach, Beethoven, and Chopin but also studies the intricacies of music theory.

The audition kindles Lisa's competitive spirit. What would her mother or her music teacher in Vienna think if she gave in to nagging doubts about her ability? Her friends rally to her aid. Hans listens as she practices in the cellar where the piano has been moved for safekeeping. He and Aaron drill Lisa in sight-reading skills. Aaron also tutors her in musical fundamentals.

Although the winter is one of the coldest on record, Lisa continues her daily practice sessions in the freezing basement. But her mood changes when she learns that Aaron has been arrested as an enemy alien and interned on the Isle of Man. Soon after, she is confined to her bed with a severe case of bronchitis. After awakening from two days of sleep, she learns that the Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor and the Americans have now joined the allies in the war against Germany.

### Suggestions for Discussion

*Exploring the meaning of the word inspiration.*

- What inspired Lisa to work so hard on her music?
- How did Lisa inspire the other residents of Willesden Lane? What other examples of inspiration have you encountered in this story? Who or what inspires you?

*Considering the role a community can play in helping individuals reach their goals.*

- How do Lisa's friends at Willesden Lane help her reach her goals?
- How do her co-workers at the factory express their support?
- What do your answers suggest about what it means to be a part of a universe of obligation?

### Finding Inspiration

Discuss where Lisa found the inspiration to follow her dreams. Begin this activity by writing the word *inspiration* at the center of the chalkboard. Then invite students to list all of the things that inspired her—music, friendships, religion. Then ask students to create a similar cluster to identify the things that inspire them. Invite them to share their ideas in small groups and then compare and contrast their sources of inspiration with those of Lisa.

## Writing Ideas

### Journal Suggestions

- Continue to add information to your timeline. Include the major developments in the war as well as the changes in the lives of Lisa and her friends at Willesden Lane.
- List the kindnesses that were shown to Lisa as she prepared for her audition? Is it possible to have a conspiracy of kindness? What might lead to such an occurrence?
- Music is a very personal expression of one's identity. What types of music do you listen to? How is the music you enjoy a reflection of your identity?

## Interdisciplinary Ideas: Music

### Responding to the CD

Below is a list of the selections Lisa played at her audition. The first is included in the CD. Before students listen to the Beethoven sonata (*Tracks 9 and 19*), ask a volunteer to read aloud the passage describing it on pages 208–209. How does the description match the mood of the sonata? How do the images that come to mind as she plays convey the feelings expressed in the work? Remind students that when Lisa plays an arpeggio, she is playing the notes of a chord consecutively, usually in quick succession. The term *con brio* means “with energy or spirit.”

Lisa's Audition Selections:

1. Beethoven's Piano Sonata in C Minor, Opus 13, Number 8 (“Pathétique”)
2. Bach's Fugue in D Minor
3. Chopin's Ballade in G Minor, Opus 23, Number 1

A number of musical terms are used in *The Children of Willesden Lane*. Assign each student one term to define and then demonstrate his or her understanding of that term. For example, a student might play scales on a kazoo to show an understanding of musical fundamentals or whistle the melody to a popular tune. Students might select such words as *acoustics*, *largo*, *presto con fuoco*, *opus*, *reprise*, *ballade*, *metronome*, *solfeggio*, *chord*, *sonata*, *chromatics*, *octaves*, *tempo*, *fugue*, and *trills*.

Lisa carefully chose compositions that reflected the mood she wanted to convey. Ask students to research the life and work of one or more of the composers she loved and then share their findings with the class. Encourage creativity. For example, students might create a cluster that describes their composer or produce an abstract collage or painting that represents the breadth of the composer's musical repertoire. They might also play a recording of one of the composer's works for the class.

### HISTORICAL SIDELIGHTS: THE MUSIC OF TEREZIN

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In England, the residents of Willesden Lane found inspiration in Lisa Jura's music. In a concentration camp in Czechoslovakia, the prisoners also turned to music for inspiration and comfort. Many of the prisoners confined in Terezin, or *Theresienstadt* as it was also known, managed to smuggle in musical instruments. One musician dismantled his cello, wrapped the pieces in a blanket along with glue and clamps, and then reassembled the entire instrument in the camp. There he and other musicians played for their fellow prisoners. Historian

Ruth Bondy, a survivor of Terezin, explains what that music meant to her: “Listening with closed eyes to Bernard Kaff playing Chopin, one knew oneself to be above all the degradation suffered at German hands, to be a man.”

Bondy describes concerts where only a “a fraction of the audience had seats; everyone else stood shoulder to shoulder, listening.” She writes of one musician, Gideon Klein:

*At twenty-three years old, a tall, slim young man with black hair on a pale forehead, Gideon was a superb pianist and a master of languages, philosophy, and composition. He who should have been one of the world’s great musicians sat at the old piano, supported on crates, and burst out of the confines of the ghetto, conquering the darkness and shedding light all around.<sup>10</sup>*

*Finding a Voice: Musicians in Terezin*, a CD and study guide created by Facing History and Mark Ludwig, director of the Terezin Chamber Music Foundation, provides more information about the music, the composers, and their audiences. What does Ruth Bondy suggest about the role of music in a society? About the power of music to inspire?



Gideon Klein

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10. From *Elder of the Jews: Jakob Edelstein of Theresienstadt* by Ruth Bondy. Translated by Evelyn Abel. Grove Press, 1989, p. 364.

## Reading 6: *Faith and Perseverance, 1942-1944* (Chapters 20-24)

### Overview

The sacrifices and strains of wartime take a toll on everyone at 243 Willesden Lane—including Lisa. Still—when she wins a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music, the children and the staff celebrate. Now Lisa’s days are busier than ever. She works the morning shift at the factory and then rushes to the Academy for her music classes only to return to Willesden Lane for three hours of practice every evening. Soon the effects of her grueling schedule begin to show. When Mrs. Floyd, her piano master, discovers that Lisa’s arms are sore from lifting heavy bolts of cloth in the factory, she finds her a job as a pianist in a lounge at the Howard Hotel in London.

At first, Lisa knows only a few popular tunes, but she quickly learns to play many of the soldiers’ favorites. The lounge is a popular gathering place for American, Free French,\* and the British troops. Gina, and later Gunter, stop by every week to hear Lisa play. One evening in 1943, Aaron also surprises her with a visit. His experiences on the front line have changed him.

After completing her first year of study, Mrs. Floyd invites Lisa to prepare for a debut concert at Wigmore Hall. Lisa is ecstatic, but the debut is postponed because of the war. Despite her successes, Lisa, like the other residents of Willesden Lane, is increasingly fearful about the fate of her family. It has become virtually impossible to learn anything about her relatives’ whereabouts. In this difficult time, Lisa once again invokes images of her family to give her strength for her music, but the length of the silence has begun to affect her music.

On May 7, 1945, Lisa is rehearsing with Mrs. Floyd, when the doors fly open and a fellow student announces that Germany has surrendered. The war is over! As Lisa makes her way home, she realizes that while the nightmare is over for the British, the children at Willesden Lane have not yet confronted their own personal nightmares. The young refugees flock to Jewish agencies in search of surviving family members but find few if any survivors. As the months of silence continue, Lisa is overcome with grief as she realizes that she will probably never see her parents again.



A victory celebration in London.

### Religious References in *The Children of Willesden Lane*

As the children of Willesden Lane learn of the fate of their families, many mourn.

*Kaddish*—a prayer Jews recite in memory of a loved one. The prayer praises God and reaffirms a belief in God. (p. 227)

*Yis'gadal v'yis'kadash*—the opening words in Hebrew of the Kaddish prayer. (p. 249)

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\* After France fell to the Germans in 1940, General Charles de Gaulle appealed to French men and women to join him and the British in the fight against the Nazis. By 1944, Free French forces numbered over 400,000.

## Suggestions for Discussion

*Examining the importance of hope in a time of crisis.*

- How does Mrs. Cohen express her feelings of hope?
- Why does Lisa feel a new sense of hope during the final days of the war? How does Lisa's work at the Howard Hotel contribute to those feelings?
- Throughout much of the war, Lisa remains hopeful. Why does she lose hope at war's end?

*Exploring the role of friendship in difficult times.*

- Describe Lisa's relationship with Gina. How important is the friendship to each girl?
- Why has Lisa's friendship with Aaron changed?
- Why does Lisa return to Willesden Lane rather than celebrate the end of the war with her classmates. What does that decision reveal about her relationship with the other children?

*Comparing and contrasting changes in Lisa's commitment to "make something of herself."*

- Describe Lisa's commitment to her music when she arrived in Britain in 1938. How did it shape the choices she made in her first few months in the country?
- What helped Lisa stay true to her music during the years she lived on Willesden Lane?
- What part did the Royal Academy of Music play in helping her maintain that commitment?
- How did her relationship to her music change as the war came to an end? Why do you think the event affected her music so deeply?

## A Grand Conversation

A grand conversation is structured conversation around a particular reading or film. Begin by arranging chairs in a large circle with four chairs facing one another at the center of the circle. Explain that the four chairs are speaking chairs and those in the outer circle are for listening.

Ask four students to take the middle seats and begin the conversation. Ask a fifth student to act as the recorder for the entire conversation. Each person in the middle is expected to answer at least one question or respond to at least one other student's comment. Once a person in the middle has spoken, invite a student in the outer circle to take his or her place. As students switch seats, they switch roles; speakers become listeners and listeners now have the opportunity to offer their comments. When everyone has had a turn, have the recorder summarize the conversation. This strategy encourages shared responses, inquiry, and exploration of the text.

As you prepare for the Grand Conversation, keep in mind that this section of the text may be emotionally difficult for some students. You may want to begin the conversation with general questions: What do you think of the story so far? What are your thoughts as you read about Lisa's efforts to locate her family? Allow the conversation to flow and encourage active listening skills. Although you will want to accept everyone's contributions, ask for clarification, elaboration, and explanation as needed. The aim is for students to express their interpretation of the story.

## Writing Ideas

*Journal Suggestions*

- What challenges did Lisa face as she prepared for her debut?
- What words, images, phrases, or details in this section of the book were particularly striking? What do they add to the story?



## Interdisciplinary Ideas: Music

### *Responding to the CD*

Many libraries own recordings of songs popular during World War II. Some of that music is also available on the Internet at [www.fordham.edu/balshall/mod/ww2-music-uk.htm](http://www.fordham.edu/balshall/mod/ww2-music-uk.htm). Play a few songs and discuss the mood of each. Ask students to explain their popularity in wartime.

After Aaron enlists in the British army, Lisa sends him a recording of “Liebesträume” by Franz Liszt (1811–1886). She also plays it for him when he later comes to hear her play at the Howard Hotel. The word *liebesträume* literally means “dream of love.” As students listen to the music, encourage them to write on a sheet of paper the feelings and images that come to mind as they listen to the piece. Why do you think Lisa chose to send Aaron a recording of this piece of music? Track 10 is the recording of Lisa Jura made in 1944. On track 20, Mona Golabek plays the entire piece.

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## Reading 7: *Reckoning* (Chapter 25-Epilogue)

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### Overview

Even the marriage of Gina and Gunter cannot lift the spirits of the residents of Willesden Lane in the spring of 1945. Thus far, only Gunter's mother has appeared on a list of survivors. Everyone in the families of Mrs. Cohen and Mrs. Glazer was murdered, as were most of the relatives of the young refugees at Willesden Lane. Although Gina and Gunter are among the few who are trying to move on, their wedding is a bittersweet occasion.

Soon the hostel on Willesden Lane is crowded with new arrivals, many from places like Bergen-Belsen, Dachau, and Auschwitz. As the building becomes more crowded, residents over the age of twenty-one, including Lisa, are asked to find somewhere else to live. Lisa moves to Mrs. Canfield's house. As her debut rapidly approaches, she is increasingly fearful that she will not be able to perform. Just as Lisa is about to tell Mrs. Floyd of her fears, she receives word that Rosie and Leo have survived and are on their way to London. Only after their emotional reunion does Lisa allow music to return to her life. Her debut is made all the more spectacular by the presence of her two sisters—her only remaining family. Surrounded by Sonia and Rosie and her beloved friends from Willesden Lane, Lisa is ready to face the world.



The "children of Willesden Lane." Lisa Jura is standing on the far left. Seated in front of her is her sister Sonia.

### Suggestions for Discussion

*Examining the changes in Lisa's life at the end of the war.*

- What qualities helped Lisa survive the losses she experienced at the end of the war?
- As Lisa is about to walk on stage for her debut, she thinks to herself about how much she has changed since the days she fantasized about playing for Austrian royalty. To what extent has she achieved her dream? How is her life different from the one she dreamed of in Vienna? What parts of her life are unchanged by her experiences?

*Evaluating the significance of Lisa's debut performance.*

- Why was the evening particularly important to Lisa and her friends?
- What did Lisa, Gina and Gunter mean when they told Mrs. Cohen that they would always be the children of Willesden Lane? How did their years on Willesden Lane help shape their identity?
- The closing passage expresses a very deep sentiment at a very important moment. Read the paragraph aloud and discuss how Lisa viewed the journey described in this book.

## Interdisciplinary Ideas: Music

### *Responding to the CD*

At her friends' wedding (pp. 254-255), Lisa performs the Grieg piano concerto she imagined playing as she traveled to her piano lesson in Vienna (p. 2). Replay the music for the class (Tracks 1 and 12) and discuss why she may have chosen it for a celebration at a time of mourning.

At her debut, Lisa played a few pieces that she played at her audition. Replay the Beethoven sonata (Tracks 9 and 19). Ask a volunteer to read aloud the passage on pages 265-266 that describes the new experiences that Lisa brought to the work. How did those experiences shape the way she approached the piece? What experiences did her audience bring to the piece? How did it shape individual responses?

The Prelude in C-sharp Minor (Tracks 11 and 21) by Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943). It has been described as "dark" or "brooding." What qualities evoke those feelings? How does the pianist turn the piece into a hymn of gratitude? Why do you think the authors describe this piece as moving Lisa's audience to tears? In the aftermath of World War II, what experiences and emotions did the audience bring to the work?

## Final Projects

The four projects listed below are examples of concluding assignments that can be used to assess learning of the content of the book and to evaluate critical thinking skills.

### *1. Turning The Children of Willesden Lane into a Film*

Writers use detail to draw attention to a person or event. Filmmakers use color, motion, and sound to accomplish the same thing. Encourage students to think about how they might create a film based on the book. Then ask students to select a key event in the book that they would like to turn into a scene in their film. Ask them to work in groups or individually to create a script for that scene. They should describe the place or places the action takes place, the lighting, and cast members. They might also choose music to underscore emotions related to the scene. Invite groups to share their scenes with the class. Reviews should be based on the accuracy of historical and geographic detail, understanding of the book and its themes, and creativity.

### *2. Monument to Willesden Lane*

Honoring the individuals who have made a positive difference in our lives is a way of remembering the past and teaching future generations. Most of the men and women who organized the *Kindertransport* and supported the children during the war years are no longer living. Ask the class to design a monument in honor of those involved in the rescue mission. What would be a fitting monument? Where should it be built? What materials should be used? What words or quotations might be inscribed on it? What should it be called?

After the class has brainstormed ideas, ask students to design their own monument. Explain that the monuments will be displayed so each should be accompanied by a brief explanation, its title, where it should be located, and what materials might be used to create it. *Note:* You may also wish to access lessons on monuments that appear on Facing History's website at [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org).

### 3. Family Stories

Invite students to write a story that has been passed down in their own family. Encourage them to think about how they learned the story and why it has special meaning to them. In planning their story, students should try to answer the following questions:

What happened?

Why did it happen?

What were your thoughts about the story at the time it happened or when you first heard it?

What are your thoughts about the story now?

What lessons does your story teach others?

Ask students to use their story plans to write a first draft. Encourage students to read the draft to a partner for missing words and ideas. Explain that the purpose of this process is to help them see their work from a reader's point of view. Encourage positive feedback. Students should tell their partners what they liked best about the story. They should also let their partners know what parts of the story were confusing or what parts they would like to know more about. The next step is a final draft that incorporates comments and suggestions. Remind students to give their stories a title.

### 4. Legacies

In 1999, Mona Golabek, her sister Renée Golabek-Kaye, and her nieces Michele and Sarah Golabek-Goldman were the featured artists at the 60th reunion of the *Kindertransport* in London (*Track 22*). Performing live on the BBC, Michele and Sarah played Debussy's "Clair de Lune," and "Rhapsody" by Maxwell Eckstein, two of their grandmother's favorite works (*Track 23*). The girls thanked the British people for saving their grandmother's life and vowed to pass her legacy on to future generations (*Track 24*). Then their mother, Renée Golabek-Kaye, played the Prelude in B Minor by Abram Chasins (*Track 25*).

A *legacy* is often defined as a gift from one generation to those that follow. Discuss the legacy Lisa Jura received from her mother and how she passed it on to her children and grandchildren. Then invite students to share a legacy they received from a family member, friend, neighbor, or teacher. It might be a musical legacy much like the one Lisa Jura gave her family. It might also be a skill like cooking, gardening, or carpentry; a hobby like stamp collecting or building model airplanes; or a special memento. Encourage students to explain the significance of the gift they received and how they plan to pass it on to the next generation.