



Jewish artists in Wales: Heinz Koppel

GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS

This is one of 20 resources about the Holocaust and Wales.

It explores the life and work of the Berlin-born Jewish artist Heinz Koppel, who lived in Wales. It uses elements of Drama and Movement and would be best delivered in a large space such as a Drama studio.

Ages: 9-14.

Content warning: Heinz Koppel's biography in The Information Sheet and Activities for Learners mentions the murder of his mother in the Treblinka Extermination Camp.

1. PURPOSE OF THE RESOURCE

Learning about the Holocaust through local examples allows learners to **discover their heritage** and **develop a sense of place and cynefin**. It also removes the idea of 'otherness' – that this happened to other people in another place and time – and instead, **creates feelings of connection and empathy**.

2. LEARNING AIMS

The aim of the resource is to enable learners to:

1. Explore past and contemporary ethical and moral issues and engage with concepts of prejudice, discrimination, antisemitism, extremism, equality, tolerance, humanity, responsibility, good, and evil, make a connection between past and present issues, and consider what is happening locally and globally today.
2. Develop critical and reflective thinking.
3. Explore and develop creative and artistic skills.
4. Develop confidence, resilience, and empathy: To become more aware of their own experiences and feelings when engaging in activities with others, and to recognise that other people have experiences and feelings.
5. Become responsible citizens in Wales and the wider world.

3. FOCUS OF THE RESOURCE

1. Critically reviewing how past and contemporary events are perceived, interpreted, and represented; forming their own viewpoint and developing self-awareness.
2. Critically analysing and evaluating evidence; interpreting and synthesising information; drawing informed conclusions about the world, its past, present, and future.

3. Expressing ideas and emotions through art.
4. Learning about the complexity and diversity of human societies (e.g., values, social norms, rituals, and faiths) and the impact of actions and beliefs.
5. Developing an understanding of challenges and opportunities in their personal lives and wider society and considering how to respond ethically.

4. WHAT SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND EXPERIENCE THE RESOURCE HELPS DEVELOP

Indicators of learning:

1. Knowledge and understanding of Heinz Koppel and his artwork, and how his work was influenced by his experiences as a refugee.
2. Understanding of how a sense of place and community can influence artistic works.
3. Ability to critically evaluate, and use different sources (e.g., biography, audio clip, and artwork) to form and express their own views, opinions, knowledge, and understanding.
4. Experience of participating in art as both a creator and an audience.
5. Understanding of ethical and moral concepts, e.g., discrimination, racism, antisemitism, and the importance of democratic values and human rights.
6. Ability to make a connection between past and contemporary discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and religion and consider what is happening today in Wales, the UK, and the world, e.g., refugees coming to the UK/Wales.
7. Understanding that people have different beliefs, values, and experiences and respecting the needs and rights of others.
8. Ability to work as part of a team.
9. Experience of participating in group discussions and tasks.
10. Becoming more aware of their own experiences and feelings, values, and beliefs and being able to communicate them.
11. Developing empathy for other people and their circumstances/challenges they face(d), e.g., refugees.

5. HOW THE RESOURCE SUPPORTS LEARNING IN LOCAL (CYNEFIN), NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL CONTEXTS

This resource allows learners to hear the stories of people who were directly affected by the Holocaust, and who lived in Wales. These are the stories of people who contributed to and were part of their local Welsh communities. They settled and had families here and their history is part of the story of Wales.

These local examples can help learners understand the connection between Welsh history and global events like World War Two and the Holocaust.

6. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Artist Heinz Koppel was born to Jewish parents in Berlin in 1919. After the Nazis came to power in Germany, they emigrated to Prague, Czechoslovakia (modern-day Czech Republic), and later fled to the United Kingdom in 1938. His father, Joachim Koppel, founded and worked at the Aero Zipp factory at Treforest and Heinz studied art in London. His mother, Paula, had severe arthritis and was unable to leave with the rest of the family; she was eventually murdered in the Treblinka Extermination Camp. His cousin, Harry Weinberger, who had also fled Czechoslovakia, was also an artist and they had the same teacher in London.

From 1944, Heinz lived in Dowlais near Merthyr Tydfil where he taught art to children and adults. His artworks were inspired by the surrounding countryside and the industrial areas of Wales. In 1949, he married fellow artist Renate Fischl and they lived with their children in London and Liverpool before finally settling in Cwmerfyn, near Aberystwyth. He was one of the founding members of the [56 Group Wales](#), an artists' organisation with the aim of promoting Welsh modernist art and artists. Heinz died in 1980 aged 61.

7. IDEAS and QUESTIONS

This resource uses elements of Drama and Movement and would be best delivered in a large space such as a Drama studio.

1. The resources can be used to explore the connection between Heinz Koppel, a Jewish refugee artist, and Wales.

Learners are to walk about the space. Call out 'M' and the learners are to find a way to create the shape of that letter with their bodies, either in small groups or alone. This continues until M-E-R-T-H-Y-R B-L-U-E-S is spelt. You may wish to speed up as time goes on to keep the energy flowing.

'Merthyr Blues' refers to a painting of Merthyr Tydfil created by Heinz Koppel in 1955.

The painting's style "prompts comparison with newspaper cartoons. A woman pushes her pram past the old bus depot, a man on a ladder pastes up an advertisement for Daz washing powder, whilst dogs behave badly on the street. The local blues singer, who hovers above the town accompanied by the lyrics of her song, offers a sense of hope and salvation to the everyday world below."¹

Questions:

- What is Heinz Koppel's connection to Wales?
- How did Welsh landscapes and towns influence his work?

2. The resource can be used:

¹ Art UK, *Merthyr Blues*, Heinz Koppel (1919-1980), National Museum Wales, National Museum Cardiff <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/merthyr-blues-162225/search/actor:koppel-heinz-19191980-68749/page/1/view_as/grid> [accessed 9 April 2022].

- To explore and recognise the experiences and feelings of people who were persecuted by the Nazis.
- To explore the importance of community and belonging.
- To enable learners to become more aware of their own experiences and feelings and to develop confidence, resilience, and empathy.

Questions:

- Why did Heinz Koppel feel an outsider and how did this influence his artwork?
- How did Heinz Koppel explore his life experiences in his art?
- How did the trauma of losing his mother and fleeing his home impact Heinz's life and work?
- What does 'feeling an outsider' mean?

4. The resource can be used to promote learners' creativity by encouraging them to explore a painting through physical theatre and movement.

Project the ['Merthyr Blues'](#) painting on the whiteboard.

As a whole group, learners are to recreate the 'Merthyr Blues' painting by Heinz Koppel. This can be done by learners entering the space one by one or in small groups and adopting a position. For example, the first learner could take the position of the woman pushing the pram. Next, a group of learners could create the shape of the building behind her using their bodies. This process continues until all the learners have joined the image. There is no right or wrong here. Let the learners creatively explore the painting with their bodies in the space and encourage observation and interaction with others.

The next step is to bring the image to life with ten seconds of movement. How might the different parts of the painting interact? You could perhaps play some classical music here to accompany the movement, e.g., [Rachmaninoff's Prélude in G-Sharp Minor, Op. 32, No. 12](#), played by Władysław Szpilman.

Question:

- How does using different media, i.e., movement and music, impact learners' understanding of and interaction with an artwork?

5. The resource can be used to promote critical and reflective thinking: To enable learners to draw together a range of sources, e.g., biography (see Information Sheet and Activities for Learners), [painting](#), and an [audio clip](#), to gain an understanding of some of the complexities of living in Wales as a Jewish refugee artist.

Questions:

- What source impacted the learners most and why?
- What did they learn about Heinz Koppel?

8. RESEARCH AND FURTHER INFORMATION

1. Introduction to teaching and learning about the Holocaust:

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) [Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust](#) provide information on why, what, and how to teach about the Holocaust.

The Holocaust Educational Trust's worksheet [‘Defining the Holocaust’](#) may be used to introduce learners to the topic of the Holocaust; it helps learners to think about how the Holocaust is defined and why the issue of definition is important.

2. Further reading:

ART UK: [Heinz Koppel](#).

JHASW/CHIDC: [Punch & Die](#), the official Aero Zipp Fasteners Limited magazine.

Refugees from National Socialism in Wales: [Treforest Industrial Estate](#).

Wikipedia: [Władysław Szpilman](#).

3. A list of 20 resources about [the Holocaust and Wales](#):

- [Kindertransport 1: Jewish Life in Central Europe before the Second World War.](#)
- [Kindertransport 2: The Journey to Britain.](#)
- [Kindertransport 3: Arrival in Wales.](#)
- [Kindertransport 4: Life in Wales.](#)
- [Memories of Kristallnacht: Destruction and Flight.](#)
- [Memories of Kristallnacht: The Last Bar Mitzvah.](#)
- [Jewish Artists in Wales: Josef Herman.](#)
- [Jewish Artists in Wales: Heinz Koppel.](#)
- [Aero Zipp Fasteners at Treforest Trading Estate.](#)
- [General Paper and Box Manufacturing Company at Treforest Trading Estate.](#)
- [‘Enemy Aliens’ and Internment Camps.](#)
- [‘Enemy Aliens’ and Human Rights.](#)
- [Jewish Refugees as Domestic Servants.](#)
- [Jewish Refugee Doctors, Dentists, and Nurses in Wales.](#)
- [Jewish Refugees in the British Army during the Second World War.](#)
- [Religious Life of Jewish Refugees in Wales.](#)
- [The Welsh Language.](#)
- [Liberation.](#)
- [Identity.](#)
- [Remembering the Holocaust.](#)