

## The Holocaust and Wales

### Jewish Refugees as Domestic Servants

#### Teachers' Notes

This resource looks at refugees from Nazi Germany who became domestic servants in Wales. This was the most common occupation among refugees, with 20,000 women from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia entering Britain on domestic visas before September 1939.

The resource explores the life of Fanny Höchstetter, a German-Jewish refugee who became a domestic servant in Llangollen.

It contains:

- Useful definition: 'domestic service'
- Background information about refugees in domestic service and where to find out more
- Useful definition: 'Protected Areas'
- Short biography of Fanny and Bertl Höchstetter
- Link to audio clip of oral history recording of Ernie Hunter, Fanny's son
- Photographs of Fanny and her sister Bertl and the Hand Hotel, Llangollen
- Transcript of the audio clip

The resource assumes a basic understanding of the Holocaust. You may wish to cover the Holocaust Educational Trust's (HET) worksheet ['Defining the Holocaust'](#) before exploring these resources. See also the HET's ['General Principles for Teaching the Holocaust'](#).

#### Learning aims:

- To understand why Jewish refugees worked as domestic servants in Britain and what their lives were like
- To experiment with presenting ideas and information about people concisely and creatively through writing
- To develop critical thinking and a sense of empathy with those who have experienced suffering in the past
- To explore the importance of this story on Wales and the wider world and its connections to contemporary issues, including refugees, antisemitism, prejudice and racism

## Curriculum links

### The Four Purposes

Ambitious, capable learners who:

- are building up a body of knowledge and have the skills to connect and apply that knowledge in different contexts
- can communicate effectively in different forms and settings
- can explain the ideas and concepts they are learning about
- undertake research and evaluate critically what they find

Enterprising, creative contributors who:

- connect and apply their knowledge and skills to create ideas and products
- think creatively to reframe and solve problems
- express ideas and emotions through different media

Ethical, informed citizens who:

- find, evaluate and use evidence in forming views
- engage with contemporary issues based upon their knowledge and values
- understand and exercise their human and democratic responsibilities and rights
- understand and consider the impact of their actions when making choices and acting
- are knowledgeable about their culture, community, society and the world, now and in the past
- respect the needs and rights of others, as a member of a diverse society

Healthy, confident individuals who:

- have secure values and are establishing their spiritual and ethical beliefs
- are building their mental and emotional well-being by developing confidence, resilience and empathy
- have the confidence to participate in performance

### Statements of What Matters

Main Area of Learning and Experience: Humanities

Progression Step: 3 & 4

- Enquiry, exploration and investigation inspire curiosity about the world, its past, present and future
- Events and human experiences are complex, and are perceived, interpreted and represented in different ways
- Human societies are complex and diverse, and shaped by human actions and beliefs

- Informed, self-aware citizens engage with the challenges and opportunities that face humanity, and are able to take considered and ethical action

#### Other Areas of Learning and Experience:

##### Health and Well-being

- How we process and respond to our experiences affects our mental health and emotional well-being
- How we engage with social influences shapes who we are and affects our health and well-being

##### Languages, Literacy and Communication

- Expressing ourselves through languages is key to communication

#### Cross curricular skills and integral skills

##### Literacy

- Developing oracy through discussion, role play, questioning and presentations, and adapting oracy skills for audience and purpose while listening to and debating different viewpoints
- Developing all styles of writing, e.g. describing, explaining, discussing, evaluating and creative writing, combined with the use of disciplinary-specific terminology and vocabulary
- Accessing and exploring a range of texts from a variety of places and times to analyse evidence, to think critically, to infer meaning, and to evaluate interpretations and viewpoints

##### Creativity and innovation

- Encouraging openness to different ideas and ways of thinking, enabling the expression of reasoned opinions about these differences

##### Critical thinking and problem-solving

- Developing the ability to think analytically and understand the past and present as well as to imagine possible futures
- Collecting, reflecting and critically evaluating the use of sources and evidence

##### Personal effectiveness

- Evaluating, justifying and expressing considered responses in a variety of ways

#### Cross-cutting themes

##### Relationship and sexuality education (RSE):

- The material offers learners opportunities to explore human rights, values, ethics, philosophies, and religious views relating to relationships

- It supports learners to engage critically with local, national, and global RSE issues in both the past and present, helping them to become ethical, informed citizens

Human rights education and diversity (e.g., discrimination, racism, antisemitism, refugees)

- Learners develop an understanding of the importance of democratic values and human rights and reflect on their civic responsibilities

### Cynefin – supporting learning in local contexts

The Holocaust is a large topic that can seem distant to learners in Wales. These resources allow 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.

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. These local examples can help learners to understand the link between Welsh history and global events like the Second World War and the Holocaust.

The full list of 20 resources about The Holocaust and Wales are:

- [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](#)
- [Kristallnacht 1: Memories of Kristallnacht](#)
- [Kristallnacht 2: The last bar mitzvah](#)
- [Jewish Artists in Wales 1: Josef Herman](#)
- [Jewish Artists in Wales 2: Heinz Koppel](#)
- [Aero Zipp Fasteners at Treforest Trading Estate](#)
- [General Paper and Box Manufacturing Company at Treforest Trading Estate](#)
- [Internment of ‘enemy aliens’ 1](#)
- [Internment of ‘enemy aliens’ 2](#)
- [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](#)

## Ideas for activities

### Activity 1

The resource could be used to explore the term 'domestic service'. Ask learners what they think the term 'domestic service' means, who would work as a 'domestic servant', and what tasks they would carry out. Then show learners the **definition** of 'domestic service' from Encyclopaedia Britannica. How close is this to their own impressions?

Ask learners if they can think of any cultural depictions of life in domestic service. How is this portrayed?

For example:

- *Downton Abbey*, ITV, 26 September 2010-25 December 2015
- *Gosford Park*, dir. Robert Altman (Entertainment Film Distributors, 2001)
- Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989)
- Art UK, 'Servants' (2016) (<https://artuk.org/discover/topics/servants>)

### Activity 2

Ask learners to read the **definition** of 'domestic service', the **background information** about refugees in domestic service and the **definition** of 'protected areas'.

Why did so many refugees become domestic servants? Why might life as a domestic servant have been difficult for a Jewish refugee? Why were domestic servants often treated badly?

### Activity 3

Ask learners to read the **short biography** of Fanny and Bertl Höchstetter and look at the **photograph** of Fanny and Bertl in Germany. What are the Höchstetter sisters doing in the photograph? Why? Why did they leave Germany? (N.B. their gestures were aimed at Hitler following their dismissal).

Listen to [Audio Clip: Ernie Hunter – On his mother's time as a domestic servant](#). How was Fanny Höchstetter treated as a domestic servant in Liverpool? How did she feel? Why did she have to leave Liverpool? (see **definition** of 'protected areas' for more information).

### Activity 4

Ask learners to read the **short biography** of Fanny and Bertl Höchstetter and look at the **photograph** of the Hand Hotel in Llangollen. Learners should then imagine that they are the relative of a refugee wishing to work in domestic service at the Hand Hotel, and

have been asked to provide a reference. This could be for a chambermaid, a waiter, or another appropriate role. Learners should remember the types of tasks carried out by domestic servants, as well as any special skills that should be mentioned (e.g. English-speaking). The reference should be in the style of a letter and should be at least two paragraphs long. If possible, share a selection of references with the class and decide among the class which relative should get the 'job'.

### Activity 5

Refugees seeking work as domestic servants often paid for advertisements in the local newspaper. These advertisements needed to be short, but still able to give enough information for a prospective employer. Working in pairs, ask learners to read the **examples of advertisements** from 1939 and then write an advertisement for themselves or a member of their family. The advertisement should include what post they are seeking, what skills they have, and a return address. It should be under 30 words in length. Encourage learners to share their advertisements with the rest of the class.