

# INSIDE THE GLASS CASE

Lesson Plan:  
*Ruth Korn's Basket*

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# Inside the Glass Case Lesson Plan

- Recommended grade levels** • Grades 9-12
- Suggested timeframe** • 1-2 class periods

## Historical Context

### Nazi Germany

- When Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933, racial [antisemitism](#) and [Nazi ideology](#) became the official policy of the regime.
- Life, therefore, began to look very different for the 500,000 Jewish people that lived in Germany and made up 0.8% of the population.
- For instance, in April 1933 a general [boycott of Jewish businesses](#) was instituted.
- In 1935, the Nazi government instituted the [Nuremberg Laws](#) which were a series of laws that codified many of the elements of racial antisemitism and Nazi ideology.

### Kristallnacht

- On November 9 and 10, 1938, Nazi leaders unleashed a series of pogroms against the Jewish population throughout Germany, annexed Austria, and in areas of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, which were recently occupied by German troops.
- This event is commonly referred to as Kristallnacht, meaning the Night of Broken Glass, and the November Pogrom.
- This event marks a turning point where legal restrictions against Jewish people escalated into state-sponsored violence.
- Jews were freely attacked in the street, in their homes, and at their places of work and worship. Around 30,000 Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Hundreds were injured, and almost 100 were murdered. Approximately 7,000 Jewish businesses and homes were damaged and looted, 1,400 synagogues were burned, many cemeteries and schools were vandalized.

### Emigration

- By September 1939, approximately 282,000 Jews had emigrated from Germany and approximately 117,000 had emigrated from Austria.



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## Emigration (continued)

- Many Jewish people thought that what was happening would eventually come to an end, or were not able to leave because they did not have a place to go. Further, many could not afford the journey, or were not successful in their efforts to leave. They needed citizenship papers, immigrant and travel visas, and often needed a sponsor that would be financially responsible.
- Countries had immigration quotas and only allowed a certain number of immigrants per year. For example, the [United States](#) allowed 25,957 German immigrants. Only 2,372 German Jews were actually admitted in 1933.

## Denmark

- The Nazis invaded Denmark on April 9, 1940.
- During the [occupation](#), the Danish Government insisted there was no “Jewish problem” in Denmark and so the restricting of rights and efforts to isolate and segregate Jews that happened in other countries did not happen in Denmark.
- By September 1943, however, the German military [declared martial law](#) and planned to deport Danish Jews.
- The Danish government, private citizens, and Jewish organizations worked together to hide Jews in order to protect them from the impending deportation.
- Of more than 7,000 Jews living in Denmark, the Germans seized about 470 and deported them to the [Theresienstadt](#) ghetto.

## Goals & Objectives

Students will know:

- How monetary, political, social and geographic barriers prevented many Jewish people from escaping Nazi Germany.

Students will understand:

- The psychological impact of trying to escape Nazi Germany.
- The attention to detail, coupled with the abundance of resources needed to coordinate an escape plan, as well as the physical effort required by the refugee(s) to successfully escape Nazi Germany.



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## Goals & Objectives (continued)

Students will be able to:

- Explain why Jewish people couldn't just leave and be able to elaborate using evidence on the various barriers that prevented them from doing so.
- Discuss both the human and geographical barriers that prevented or hindered the effort to escape.

### ELL Language Objective

- Students will be able to discuss the impact that language barriers pose for those who are traveling from one geographic place to another as they attempt to escape Nazi Germany.
- *While this wouldn't be a traditional ELL lesson, it does serve as a connection point for ELL students to relate to the material and reflect on and share perspective with other students, the struggle associated with being immersed in a place where everyone speaks a different language.*

## Procedure

This lesson is meant to be taught after students have learned about life for Jewish people under Nazi occupation. Often students will wonder or even ask out loud why the Jews didn't just leave when life was becoming difficult. They will explore that question in this lesson.

### Part 1: Do Now

Ask students to think about the following question and record their responses on a piece of paper: Why didn't Jewish people leave when life was so difficult for them? Once they have completed writing their responses, lead a short conversation about their answers. Explain that this will be the guiding question for today's class.

### Part 2: Artifact Exploration

Step 1:

- Show the students the image of Ruth Korn's basket, and ask students to discuss what they notice, what they see, what could this be? Record student observations using a visualizer or writing on a smart board.



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## Procedure (continued)

### Step 2:

- Show the news article about the Korn family's arrival in the United States and tell students that this family is connected to the basket. Allow students to do a think-pair-share as they are considering the connections.

### Step 3:

- Explain the full story to students - that the Korn family escaped from Nazi-occupation and made their way to the United States. They were sponsored by a wealthy relative in Michigan but had to travel across Europe with their twin daughters in order to do so. They carried the babies in the basket.

### Step 4:

- Distribute copies of the American Express cost estimate to the students, along with a [world map](#). Have students look for connections to both the family and the basket looking for clues revolving around money, travel, modes of transportation, and technology and note them on the paper by 'talking to the text'.

### Step 5:

- Lead a short discussion reflecting on the cost of their travel - in 1942, \$1,688 is equivalent to about \$27,500. Many people could not have afforded that! Also reflect on how difficult the journey would have been - they traveled a great distance by foot, train, plane, and boat over a relatively short amount of time. Further, as Jews they were targeted throughout much of Europe, so they had to be extremely careful and might have been worried and nervous.

## Part 3: Barriers to Emigration

### Step 6:

- Individually or in groups have students explore the following:
  - [The Refugee Crisis \(text and video\)](#)
  - [The Challenges to Escape](#)
  - [What did Refugees Need to Obtain a US Visa in the 1930s?](#)
  - [How Many Refugees Came to the United States from 1933-1945?](#)



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## Procedure (continued)

### Step 7:

- After students take time to explore the resources above, ask them to create a chart breaking down barriers to escape in the following categories: physical, emotional, political, and social. Teachers may model one or more examples in each category. For example, expenses such as the meals on route cited in the American Express receipt may be listed as a physical barrier (monetary cost). The U.S.'s Johnson-Reed Act limiting immigration through a quota system may be listed as a political barrier.

### Step 8:

- Students may be encouraged to create as extensive of a list as possible. Encourage this by sharing ideas such as making connections with people you can trust and who can trust you, having access to familial resources as the Korn family did, or not having modern conveniences to research information like we do today.

## Part 4: Reflection

### Step 9:

- Ask students to share out their lists and discuss as a whole class. How might these barriers have impacted the Korn family? Summarize why these barriers would have made escaping the Holocaust difficult or even impossible for many Jewish people. Students may respond in a whole group discussion, in groups, or individually through verbal or written communication.

### Step 10:

- To conclude, have students think back to the basket. Have them write or discuss why they would have kept it and donated it to the Holocaust Memorial Center.



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## Content Standards

### Michigan K-12 Standards for Social Studies

- World History / U.S. History
  - 7.1.3 Genocide in the 20th Century – differentiate genocide from other atrocities and forms of mass killing and explain its extent, causes, and consequences in the 20th century and to the present.
  - 7.2.4 World War II - Responses to Genocide – investigate the responses to Hitler’s Final Solution policy by the Allies, the U.S. government, international organizations, and individuals.
  - 7.2.6 Case Studies of Genocide – analyze the development, enactment, and consequences of, as well as the international community’s responses to, the Holocaust (or Shoah), Armenian Genocide, and at least one other genocide.

### C3 Framework:

- D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
- D2.His.6.9-12. Analyze the ways in which the perspectives of those writing history shaped the history that they produced.
- D2.His.11.9-12. Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.