



German Jews and the Holocaust

The Gumprich and Voos families

Key Question: What experiences did some German Jews have before and during the Holocaust? How have these been remembered?

Teaching Aims & Learning Objectives

- To reflect on middle-class Jewish life in Germany prior to the war
- Recognise and explore the different experiences of two families
- To think more deeply about the international situation regarding Jewish refugees in the late 1930s
- To explore ways in which the Holocaust is remembered

Rationale

Research by the Centre indicates few teachers address Jewish life before the Second World War in their classrooms, even though it is only by deepening students' comprehensions that they can begin to grasp the impact of the genocide on contemporary Europe. It is equally crucial to restore agency to those who would later become victims of the Holocaust, whilst ensuring students' understand there was nothing inevitable about the genocide.

This lesson addresses these themes using rare home movie footage taken by a family from Munster, Germany. It encourages students to consider some of the issues and challenges faced by German-Jewish families on the eve of the Second World War, and reflect on matters related to memory.

Key Information

- The lesson is intended for Year 9 students and above.
- Timings are suggested on the basis of a one hour lesson, and may need modifying accordingly.
- Prior knowledge is not needed. However, do not underestimate the knowledge and conceptions your students may already have. Where appropriate, ensure this is explored and rectified as required.
- For this lesson you will need the Gumprich film, the accompanying PowerPoint, and a copy of the Yad Vashem Page of Testimony.

Lesson Plan

Starter (20 minutes)

Explain to students they will be watching a short film and that they will need to reflect upon what they are watching. Suggest to them they should keep the following questions in mind:

- Can they identify the number of people being focussed on?
- What are the people doing in the film?
- Where do they think the films were shot?
- When do they think they were made?
- What kind of films are they?

Begin playing the Gumprich film with the sound turned off (ideally the film should be set up to start without showing the title shot). After 1:26 minutes stop the film and collect feedback from the students. Develop the conversation by asking how students' might establish if their answers are right or wrong, anticipating that at least one student will suggest turning the sound on.

Before replaying the film, ask students to remember the following:

- The names of the people they will see (Siegfried, Louisa, Walter and Birgitte Gumprich; Rabbi Julius and Stephanie Voos)
- Where and when the films were shot (Münster, Germany, 1938-1939)

You may find Slide 2 of the PowerPoint useful in helping students understand where Münster is. Replay the film with the sound turned on, again stopping at 1:26 minutes. With students working in pairs or small groups, ask them to come up with two or three questions they now have about these two families, their lives, and the time period.

Building more context (20 minutes)

Collect students questions. This might be done by students adding them to flip-chart paper positioned around the classroom, or by writing them on a whiteboard. If the technology is available, students could tweet their questions to the teacher so as to create a live feed which is displayed on an interactive whiteboard. Whichever approach is used, students should see and/or hear all of their peers' questions.

Play the next part of the film with the sound turned on. Mute the sound at 2:02 minutes when the narrator says 'they escaped at the last minute'. Now ask students to consider how this new information changes their understanding of the film – they may, for instance, be surprised the families look so happy, given all that was going on around them at the time. This is a good

opportunity to remind students how although the pre-war situation was extremely unpleasant for German Jews and on occasions violent, no one knew the Holocaust would happen.

Prompt students to consider what wider issues are raised by the experience of the Gumprich family. Suggest one of these is the international situation of the time and the ability of Jewish refugees to find countries willing and able to take them in. The map shown on Slide 3 of the PowerPoint will be of use here; take the opportunity to explore the issues students feel it raises, and mention the Evian Conference of 1938 which saw many countries close their doors to Jewish people seeking to escape Germany. You might set against this reality the help given to the Gumprichs by the Catholic Priest Father Franz Grosse-Weitzfeld.

Use Slides 4-5 of the PowerPoint to shift students' focus from the Gumprichs to Rabbi Julius Voos and his wife Stefanie. Julius and Stefanie moved to Münster from Guben after the November Pogrom of 1938, when Julius had spent a short time in Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Arriving in Münster in early 1939, the Voos and Gumprich families became friends. Julius took up a position of Rabbi after his predecessor left for Argentina to escape Nazi persecution, and would be the last Rabbi in Münster. The Rabbi and his wife moved to Bielefeld in spring 1942; in 1943 they were deported with their young son to Auschwitz, where they were killed.

Plenary (15 minutes)

Display Slide 6 of the PowerPoint. You may also wish to print copies of this Slide to distribute among the class. Ask students to take a few moments to try and work out what they are looking at, before explaining that this form is used by Yad Vashem as a way of recording (and thereby memorialising) the victims of the Holocaust. This particular Page of Testimony is for Stefanie Voos.

Guide students towards thinking more deeply about the questions raised by this document by asking who filled it in? Who is missing from it? The form was completed by Susan – Stefanie's best friend – in 1970. Susan knew Julius and Stefanie were dead, but significantly she makes no mention of their son Danny. She also does not list Bielefeld as the family's final place of residence. Together this suggests Susan did not know some of the details of the Voos family's experiences in the early 1940s. Ask students what this reveals about who remembers, what they remember, and what is forgotten?

Build on these ideas by displaying Slide 7 of the PowerPoint. This is one of thousands of 'stumble stones' (*stolpersteine* in German) found across Germany. Explain to students this particular stone is located outside the City Hall in Münster; it is a small, brass cobble, set into the ground so that you literally 'stumble' over it. Gather students' thoughts on this: is it fitting

and appropriate? Is it better located where Julius lived, rather than where his family were murdered? Is there a right, wrong, or 'best way' to remember the Holocaust?

Engaging all learners

Since the lesson material addresses a wide range of themes and issues, teachers may find some students need to spend extended time unpacking and exploring some of these. Likewise, it may be worth supporting some students in their analysis of the film by supplementing verbal instructions with cards carrying key questions for them to address, and/or by giving them a chart or grid to record their thoughts. More confident and assured students could be encouraged to identify a theme or issue of particular interest to them for further exploration and research. These might include the responses of countries to the refugee crises of the 1930s, the controversy surrounding stumble stones, and the post-war legacy of Julius Voos and other Rabbis.

Further Information

More information on the Pages of Testimony and The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names is available via the [Yad Vashem website](#). More contextual information on the Gumpich home movies can also be found on page 27 of [this booklet](#). Many of the themes touched on in this lesson are explored in greater depth in other materials from the Centre and our free CPD programme.

Acknowledgements

Lesson plan and materials created by Kay Andrews.

© Kay Andrews, 2014. All Rights Reserved.

Additional editing by Andy Pearce.

The map and the Page of Testimony contained on the accompanying PowerPoint come from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Yad Vashem respectively. We are keen to ensure we have credited all copyright holders, but if there has been an oversight on our part please contact us.

University College London, Gower Street, London, WC1H 0AL

Tel: +44(0)20 7612 6437 **fax:** +44(0)20 7612 6126 **email:** holocaust@ucl.ac.uk **web:** ucl.ac.uk/holocaust-education

The UCL Centre for Holocaust Education is jointly funded by Pears Foundation and the Department for Education.