
Courage To Act: Rescue in Denmark

**PRE- & POST-VISIT LESSON PLANS
FOR GRADES 6, 7, 8**



**MUSEUM OF
JEWISH HERITAGE
A LIVING MEMORIAL
TO THE HOLOCAUST**

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English Language Arts STANDARDS

| Standard | Gr 4 | Gr 5 | Gr 6 |
|----------|------|------|------|
| R1 | • | • | • |
| R2 | • | • | • |
| R3 | | • | • |
| R4 | • | • | • |
| R5 | • | | • |
| R6 | • | | |
| R7 | • | • | • |
| R9 | • | • | • |
| W4 | • | • | • |
| W6 | • | • | • |
| SL1 | • | • | • |
| SL2 | • | • | • |
| SL4 | • | • | • |
| SL5 | • | • | • |
| L3 | • | • | • |
| L4 | • | • | • |
| L6 | • | • | • |

Social Studies STANDARDS

| Standard | Gr 4 | Gr 5 | Gr 6 |
|---|------|------|------|
| Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence 1 | • | | |
| GIUE2 | • | • | • |
| GIUE3 | | | |
| GIUE4 | | | • |
| GIUE6 | • | • | • |
| Chronological Reasoning and Causation 1 | • | • | • |
| CRC3 | • | • | • |
| CRC4 | • | • | • |
| CRC5 | • | • | • |
| Comparison and Contextualization 2 | • | • | • |
| CC4 | • | | |
| CC5 | • | • | • |
| Geographic Reasoning 1 | • | | • |
| Economics and Economic Systems 1 | • | • | |
| EES6 | | | • |
| Civic Participation1 | • | • | • |
| CP2 | • | • | • |
| CP3 | • | | |
| CP4 | • | | |
| CP7 | • | | |
| CP8 | • | | |
| CP9 | • | | |
| CP9 | • | | |

Pre-Visit Objectives

—

To set a historical context for students visiting the exhibition or studying the rescue and escape of the Jews in Denmark.

—

To discuss the role of underground resistance newspapers in Denmark during the Nazi occupation and their impact on the rescue, escape, and survival of the Jews in Denmark.

—

To facilitate student understanding by introducing vocabulary, geography, and key concepts connected to the Holocaust and the exhibition.

Post-Visit Objective

—

To provide an opportunity for students to reflect on their visit to the exhibition and to make meaningful connections to the history of the Jews in Denmark under Nazi occupation, their escape, rescue, and survival and the resistance that made it possible.

NOTE TO TEACHERS ABOUT THESE LESSON PLANS:

In these lessons, students will use text, artwork, maps, and video to prepare them for a visit to the exhibition.

There are a variety of activities to choose from based on your teaching style, learning goals, and student needs. You are encouraged to use your professional judgement to decide which activities, resources, slides to use and in which order.

One thing to note is that at the end of the exhibition, there is a large, wall-sized quote, “To Save a Life is to Save the World.” If time permits

when you are in the exhibition, examine this quote with your students, as it can serve as the basis of an activity in the Post-Visit Lesson.

For background historical information about the Holocaust, please visit our [Meeting Hate with Humanity: Life During the Holocaust](#) [Teacher’s Guide](#) or the [Museum’s Holocaust Curriculum](#), both free and available to download.

Additionally, here is a timeline included in the exhibition introduction.

February 27, 1925

Adolf Hitler becomes the leader of the Nazi political party, which at first is very small. The Nazis are violently antisemitic and against democracy.

January 30, 1933

Adolf Hitler is named Germany's chancellor, or head of government.

March 1933

Nazis establish Dachau, a concentration camp used to punish anyone who the Nazis consider an "enemy" of Hitler.

April 1, 1933

Nazis lead a boycott of shops owned by Jews. During a boycott, people refuse to be customers of a certain business, as a form of pressure or protest.

August 1934

Hitler declares himself Führer, taking on the absolute powers of a dictator. Führer is a German word for "leader."

September 15, 1935

The Nuremberg Race Laws declare that Jews are no longer German citizens. The Nazis want to force Jews to leave Germany.

March–September 1938

Germany takes control of Austria and parts of Czech lands. The added territory brings hundreds of thousands more Jews under Nazi control.

November 9–10, 1938

Nazis launch Kristallnacht, or the Night of Broken Glass. People vandalize and burn hundreds of synagogues, destroy Jewish shops and homes, imprison about 30,000 Jewish men. Hundreds of Jews die across Germany, Austria, and parts of Czechoslovakia.

September 1, 1939

German troops invade Poland. Great Britain and France quickly join the war against Nazi Germany. World War II begins.

October 1939

Nazis begin forcing Jews into ghettos in occupied Poland.

November 23, 1939

German authorities in occupied Poland require Jews to wear the Star of David. In some cases, this rule includes young children.

April–June 1940

Germany invades and occupies Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and France.

May 20, 1940

The first prisoners arrive at Auschwitz. Later, the concentration camp expands and becomes the largest and deadliest of the Nazi death camps.

June 22, 1941

German troops invade the Soviet Union. With help from local populations, Nazis eventually murder about 1.5 million Jews through highly organized mass shootings.

November 1941

The first group of Jews is sent to Theresienstadt, a ghetto camp established in the Czech fortress town of Terezín.

December 7, 1941

Japan, which is on Germany's side of the war, attacks a United States military base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Soon after that, the U.S. enters the war.

December 8, 1941

In occupied Poland, the Chelmno death camp begins operations. It is the first death camp to use poison gas for the mass murder of Jews.

Aims for the pre- and post-visit lessons

—
How did nearly 95% of the Jewish population in Denmark manage to escape the Nazis and reach safety in Sweden in October 1943?

—
How did people in Denmark show bravery and determination and what lessons can we learn from their courage to act?

—
How did acts of resistance contribute to saving lives during the Holocaust?

—
What were the roles of underground resistance newspapers in Denmark during the Nazi occupation?

Pre-Visit Lesson

Slide 1

- Image of the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

Slide 2

- Display and read two aims for the lesson.

Slide 3

- Introduce **Courage to Act: Rescue in Denmark** with exhibition title and artwork by Sveta Dorosheva. This artwork was created for the exhibition.
- This exhibition highlights how almost 95% of the Jews in Denmark survived when about six million Jews in other parts of Europe were murdered during the Holocaust.
- Ask students to TURN & TALK with a partner about these questions:

What do you notice and what can you infer about the story of the escape and rescue in Denmark from this artwork?

Slide 4

- Show the **map of Europe Under Nazi Control, December 1941**. This represents Europe in 1941.
- Ask students:

What story does this map tell? (Use the key to understand what was happening in this region during WWII).

*Possible answers: Denmark and its neighbors are located in Europe. The red areas of the map are labeled Greater Germany and take up a large portion of the map. The red shows that the Nazis had control over many countries in Europe- this means they **occupied** those countries. Denmark was occupied by the Nazis. We can see the soldiers marching across Europe to indicate that the Nazis were in control of many territories. In addition to soldiers, we can see war planes and the Nazi symbol. The peach color on the key shows us the places that were aligned with Germany as collaborators. When we look at those places all together, we see the great power the Nazis and their collaborators had in the region. Finally, the gray parts of the map indicate places that were allied or neutral such as Sweden, which is an important country in this story.*

NOTES TO TEACHERS:

Here is some additional information to help students understand the significance of geography to the story of *Courage to Act: Rescue in Denmark*.

- Danish people relied on their geographical location in the escape and rescue during World War II.
- Denmark and Sweden are separated by a body of water called the Oresund Sound.
- The people of Denmark used the Oresund Sound to help them rescue the Jews in Denmark by bringing them to safety in neutral Sweden by boat. Many non-Jewish Danes also used the sound as a means of escaping the Nazis to neutral Sweden.
- The Oresund Sound varies in width, depending on which way you sail, on conditions and the skill of the navigator. The trip across the sound from Denmark to Sweden can take anywhere from half an hour up to a day.
- **Neutral** means that Sweden was not occupied by the Nazis during World War II and therefore it was a safe place where Jewish people could escape from Nazi persecution. **Occupation is when an army or group of people take control of another country or area by force.**
- In October 1943 Sweden opened its borders to the Jews of Denmark, who were fleeing as refugees. The definition of **refugee** is one who flees in search of refuge, as in times of war, political oppression, or religious persecution.

Continued >

Slide 5

- Read *Occupied Denmark* with students, introducing it by saying, “In April 1940, Germany occupied Denmark.”
- Ask students to TURN & TALK with a partner about the question:
What can you learn about the German occupation of Denmark from this passage?

Slide 6

- Display timeline and ask, “What were Jewish people throughout Europe experiencing under the Nazis during this time

Slide 7

- We are going to focus on resistance to the Nazis in Denmark, how that resistance helped Jews escape and saved lives during the Holocaust.
- In order to understand what happened in Denmark, we need to understand a definition of resistance and some of the ways that **resistance** took place.
- Ask students to TURN & TALK with a partner or hold a whole class brainstorm to explore how they might define resistance.

Slide 8

- Display and read with students the text about **Resistance**.

Slide 9

- This photograph was taken in the city of Vienna in Austria, which Germany annexed in 1938.
(*Jews wearing a yellow badge in Vienna, Austria*)
- Ask students to TURN & TALK with a partner about these questions:
What do you observe in this photograph?
What were some goals of the Nazis when they forced Jews to wear yellow badges shaped like the Star of David?

Slide 10

- Display, read, and discuss with students, *Maintaining Dignity and Safety in Denmark*

Slide 11

- Introduce **Escape and Rescue – Gerda III** by saying, “Some ways people resisted the Nazis in Denmark were to help Jews find hiding places, to share information, food, and money, and to organize networks to help Jews escape to safety in neutral Sweden.”
- When we visit the exhibition, **Courage to Act: Rescue in Denmark**, at the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, we will learn more about the role one particular museum artifact—a boat called Gerda III—played in that rescue.”
- Read the text on slide 11 with students.

Slide 12

- Show Gerda III video.

Slide 13

- Introduce **Armed Resistance** by saying, “Another form of resistance against the Nazis across Europe was armed resistance. **Armed resistance** included spontaneous acts of revenge; organized armed uprisings in the ghettos and concentration camps; partisan activities; and sabotage.”
- Read the text on slide 13 with students.

Slide 14

- Introduce **Documenting the Unimaginable** by saying, “Another form of resistance against the Nazis were the attempts to compile and spread the news of Nazi brutalities, both to Jews in occupied Europe as well as to the free world. This included documenting Nazi crimes for posterity through such means as underground newspapers.”
- Ask students to TURN & TALK with a partner about the questions:
How would an underground newspaper be considered resistance?
What were the implicit dangers of creating or distributing an underground newspaper?
Why were underground newspapers necessary?
- Let’s take a look at creating underground newspapers in Denmark during Nazi occupation.

Continued >

Slide 15

- Look at this [illustration by Sveta Dorosheva](#).
What do you see in this drawing?
What story can you tell using this artwork?
- Now we will watch a one-minute excerpt of a Danish documentary called “Denmark in Chains” showing the processes of making and distributing an underground newspaper.

Slide 16

- Play minute 14:57-15:51 of this [video](#) “Denmark in Chains”. Ask the students:
What do you see in the video that you can also find in the illustration?

Slide 17

- Introduce this excerpt of Martin Metzon’s testimony, by saying “Now we will watch a 2-minute video of testimony from Martin Metzon, who will talk about his experiences as a young man in the resistance in Denmark. Martin Metzon was a Danish citizen born in Germany. He and his family moved to Denmark shortly before Hitler was named Chancellor of Germany in 1933. When Germany occupied Denmark, Metzon joined the resistance and participated in Denmark’s resistance newspaper. He also participated in sabotage efforts against the Nazis. Let’s watch the video now.”
- Play the video [Testimony \(Transcript\)](#)

NOTES TO TEACHERS:

In October 1943 when the Nazis planned to round up Jews in Denmark, Martin Metzon and his family went into hiding. Eventually they were able to escape to Sweden on a fishing boat. In Sweden he joined other exiled Danes to continue to resist the Nazis. He would later become an American citizen and serve as the Vice Consul and Consul to Denmark for almost 40 years; receiving praise and recognition for his service to Denmark.

Slide 18

- This is an example of an underground Danish newspaper. We are going to read Danish resistance newspapers about an event called the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Slide 19

- Read about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising with students

Slide 20

- Read through the instructions for the document analysis of a Danish Resistance Newspaper. There are several articles to choose from. Students can read the same newspaper article or teachers can choose to jigsaw the articles and have students read different articles and compare and contrast them.
- Provide students with [one of the translated articles](#) and a printed sheet with the [instructions](#).

Slide 21

- Discuss these questions with the whole class:
What did you learn about the importance of resistance newspapers to people living in Denmark?
Why do you think it is important for us to learn and talk about resistance activities?
Why do you think the history of the escape and rescue of Jews in Denmark is important to learn about when studying the Holocaust?

Slide 22

What has this history made you think about?
What has changed for you? Share with the Museum community using [#CourageToAct](#)

Continued >

Post-Visit Lesson

Following the museum visit, students will reflect on their visit and discuss what they learned.

Activities Options

Slide 24 | TO SAVE A LIFE ILLUSTRATION ANALYSIS ACTIVITY

- Remind students of this artwork by Sveta Dorosheva by saying, “At the end of the exhibition, we saw a large quote that says, “To Save a Life is to Save the World.” How does this quote connect to the acts of resistance by the Danish people?”
- Ask students to TURN & TALK with a partner about the questions:

Using what you know about the Courage to Act: Rescue in Denmark exhibition, what do you think this quote means?

How can you connect this quote to what you have learned from the exhibition?

What theme, lesson, or message have you learned from this exhibition?

Possible answers: The Danes valued every person's life and considered all people, regardless of their religion, to be Danes. In this way, they were united against the Nazis. People of all ages understood that any act of kindness, care, or advocacy for their Jewish neighbors—no matter how seemingly small—could have a positive influence on that person's life. They knew that helping to rescue even one person would have a lasting impact on the world.

NOTE TO TEACHERS ABOUT THIS ILLUSTRATION:

Below are the words of the quote and what the artist represented in each word or part of the quotation:

| | |
|---------|---|
| TO SAVE | Life in Copenhagen during the first years of the Nazi occupation |
| A LIFE | Underground newspapers used in the resistance movement |
| IS | Life in Sweden |
| TO | Returning home to Denmark |
| SAVE | Celebrating the end of the war/ Denmark flag flies high |
| THE | Physical destruction evident after World War II and the Holocaust |
| WORLD | Story of Gerda Ill and helping neighbors in the escape and rescue |

- Possible reflection questions for discussion:
 - What comes to mind when you think of the rescue in Denmark and this quote?
 - How can you connect Danish acts of resistance to this quote?
 - What action can you take to honor this quote?

Possible answers: When I think of this quote, I am reminded how we, as human beings, need to take care of our neighbors. The people of Denmark taught me that I have a responsibility to stand up however I can to make our world a better place. I can represent and show how people worked together to carry out the seemingly impossible task of rescuing almost the entire Jewish population of Denmark from the Nazis during the Holocaust.

Continued >

Slide 25 | HENNY SINDING SUNDØ
TESTIMONY ACTIVITY

This two-minute video is an excerpt from a video called The Power of Conscience and is in the collection of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. It is an excerpt of an interview with Henny Sinding Sundø. You can show it to your students and discuss Henny Sinding Sundø's quote displayed in slide 26 as another way of helping students understand that most Danish citizens believed it was the right thing to do to take care of each other during the Holocaust.

Slide 26 | HENNY SINDING SUNDØ QUOTE

Henny risked her life to help more than 300 Jews escape the Nazis. **"We were not heroes,"** Henny said about her rescue work with the crew of *Gerda III*. **"It was the right thing to do, so we did it. Simple as that."** Quote credit: Testimony of Henny Sinding Sundø, recounted in personal correspondence.

Slide 27 | QUOTE FROM SURVIVOR BENT MELCHIOR

- Read quote with students **"If others did that for us, we have to do that for others when we are in the situation to help."**
- Discuss the quote and ask, "What has this story, **Courage to Act: Rescue in Denmark**, made you think about? What impact has it had on you and why? What has changed for you?"