

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

ESCAPE AND RESCUE

The Neuberger's **In Their Own Words** utilizes a diverse range of testimony excerpts from Holocaust survivors and witnesses, providing an important opportunity to discover how the Holocaust affected individuals and families. It demonstrates the human dimension of history and how decisions, big and small, affect people. Notable among the testimonies are examples of the efforts made by and for Jews to get out of Nazi Europe and find safe haven. Even if a Jewish person could get the necessary paperwork to leave a Nazi controlled state, they still needed to find a country to allow them entry. That became increasingly difficult after the Nazis took to power.

The testimony excerpts included in **In Their Own Words** are curated from longer, full length testimonies that average between 90 minutes and two hours. We've chosen to highlight some specific moments that are rich in detail and describe important moments in the survival of the narrator.

It is also important to remember that most Holocaust survivors are not trained historians. They may not remember all the dates or details perfectly. Similarly, they may not know what was happening in other parts of Europe or about other events taking place. However, their recollections of the events they experienced personally provide us with a unique window into how human beings experienced the Holocaust.

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify and discuss the various ways in which Jews tried to escape the Nazi regime
- Assess the decision-making process of individuals and the factors that guide these decisions
- Identify and discuss the historical context of the complexities associated with rescue efforts
- Analyze primary source material through the recorded accounts of Holocaust survivors

This lesson focuses on the complexities associated with escape and rescue, as told through the experiences of four Holocaust survivors and one rescuer:

- Esther Bem describes and encounter with a Nazi official when she posed under a false identity
- Suzanne Klag discusses the difficulty that resulted from being officially declared "stateless"
- Arie van Mansum tells about his work in the Dutch resistance movement giving aid and finding hiding places for Jews
- Rose Ruschin relays how worked to get to England on a student nurse visa
- Lolly Samosh describes the Danish rescue efforts which managed to get most Danish Jews to safety in neutral Sweden

ACTIVITY I

Learning about Escape and Rescue through First Person Testimony

APPROACH:

Choose and watch two or more of the testimony excerpts from **IN THEIR OWN WORDS** that deal specifically with the topic of escape and rescue.

These include:

- Esther Bem <http://intheirownwords.net/suzanne-klag>
- Suzanne Klag <http://intheirownwords.net/suzanne-klag>
- Arie van Mansum <http://intheirownwords.net/arie-van-mansum>
- Rose Ruschin <http://intheirownwords.net/rose-ruschin>
- Lolly Samosh <http://intheirownwords.net/lolli-samosh>

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Choose three of the five questions to respond to.

Questions:

- 1 What were some of the challenges the Jews faced in attempting to escape Nazi Europe?
- 2 What are some of the ways in which Jews were able to get out of Nazi Europe?
- 3 Often rescue efforts required the combined efforts of multiple people. What are some of the characteristics of the Danish rescue effort as discussed by Lolly Samosh or of the testimonies that you listened to?
- 4 What are some ways in which rescue or escape efforts impacted children?
- 5 Write a short reflection piece about one of the testimonies that you listened to. You might choose to summarize the account by creating a six-word memoir.

What is a six-word memoir? It is a writing challenge to condense a narrative or story into 6 compelling words that captures the essence of the story and intrigues the reader to want to know more. Legend has it that the famous author Ernest Hemmingway was once challenged to write a compelling six-word memoir and came up with: **“For Sale: Baby shoes, Never Worn”**. An example specific to a Holocaust experience could be: **“Stolen Childhood, Family Lost, Hope Reborn”**. The idea is to work with aspects of the narrative that resonate with you.

For more information on six-word memoirs visit:

<https://www.sixwordmemoirs.com/>
<http://writing.upenn.edu/wh/archival/documents/sixwords/>
<https://pen.org/six-word-memoirs/>