LESSON: Challenges of Escape, 1938-1941

GRADE LEVEL: Adaptable for grades 7–12
SUBJECT: Multidisciplinary
TIME REQUIRED: Approximately 90 minutes (can be broken up over multiple class periods)

This is a thematic lesson that builds on fundamental knowledge and provides in-depth exploration of a topic.

RATIONALE
Students will understand the complex factors that led German Jews to seek to emigrate from Nazi Germany and the complex factors that impeded their immigration to the United States in the 1930s and 1940s.

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS
● What “push” factors -- events and pressures that motivate people to leave their countries -- sparked Jewish emigration from Germany in the 1930s?
● Why was it difficult for many Jews to immigrate to the United States?
● How did government policies, public opinion, and global events in the 1920s and 1930s affect the ability of Jews to flee from Germany to the United States?

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES
Students will:
● Analyze primary sources
● Analyze and evaluate multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past
● Use secondary sources to inform their interpretation of primary sources

TEACHER PREPARATION
● Read the following recommended articles:
  ○ Anti-Jewish Legislation in Prewar Germany
  ○ German Jewish Refugees, 1933-1939
  ○ Immigration to the United States 1933-41
● Read the following optional articles:
  ○ The United States and the Refugee Crisis 1938-1941
  ○ United States Immigration and Refugee Law 1921-1980
● Examine the following optional resource:
  ○ What Did Refugees Need to Obtain a US Visa in the 1930s?
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MATERIALS
- USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia article: Immigration to the United States 1933-41
- The Path to Nazi Genocide video
- Newsreel video
- Steps to Immigrate to the United States
- Student worksheet and Answer Key
- Excerpts from Klaus Langer’s diary

MODIFICATIONS
The lesson is intentionally flexible to allow for individual teacher modifications for recording student responses.

LEARNER VARIABILITY MODIFICATIONS
- Key definitions displayed on a word wall
- Offer audio version or text-to-speech options for research articles
- Articles are available in 12 languages, including Spanish

INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE

WARM UP

1. Define push factors, emigration, and immigration:

   Push factors: internal and external pressures that prompt individuals to move voluntarily

   Emigration: leaving one country to permanently live in another

   Immigration: arriving in a new country to live there permanently
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ASK THE STUDENTS

- What push factors might lead people to have to emigrate? (Unwelcome by community, unemployment, laws, no access to resources such as education)
- What do people potentially give up if they immigrate to another country? (Belongings, jobs, family, friends, communities, house, pets)

Record answers on a board/padlet.

PART ONE

2. Hand out the Student Worksheet and prepare the class to watch 2 film clips. You can find the answer key here.
   
a. Review the first question on the worksheet: What push factors did Jews in Germany experience between 1933 and 1939? What led many to seek refuge in other countries?

b. View Citizens to Outcasts (Chapter 3 of Path to Nazi Genocide) to examine how the Nazis persecuted Jews. Instruct students to list examples of push factors.
   i. (Jews in greater Germany were persecuted, lost their jobs, Jewish-owned shops were boycotted; public displays of antisemitic propaganda; Kristallnacht attacks, synagogues burned; Jews sent to concentration camps, passports and financial resources seized)

c. Review the second question on the worksheet: What was happening in the U.S. in the 1930s that might have made it difficult for European Jews to immigrate to the United States?

d. View Newsreel film. Instruct students to list examples from the film that answer the question on the worksheet.
   i. (anti-immigrant attitudes, unemployment, xenophobia, isolationism, antisemitism)

3. Read the Holocaust Encyclopedia article, Immigration to the United States 1933-41, as a class or individually. Consider discussing the article as a class or in groups and ask the following question: How did US government laws and policies affect the ability of German Jews to immigrate to the United States?
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4. Have a class discussion about the Newsreel film and the Encyclopedia article. Write the orange themes below on the board or in some shared digital space. Ask students to share examples from the film and article to answer each question.

   How did American racism and antisemitism influence immigration in the 1930s?
   How did the Great Depression and economic concerns influence immigration in the 1930s?
   How did national security concerns influence immigration in the 1930s?
   How did the 1924 immigration law influence immigration in the 1930s?
   How did World War II make immigration even more difficult?

PART TWO

5. Divide the class into small groups and provide each group with the Steps to Immigrate to the United States. Ask students to discuss and draw conclusions about why they think each document or step was required for emigration and/or immigration to the United States and fill out their worksheets. Students should draw on the categories identified above (racism/antisemitism, Great Depression/economic concerns, national security concerns, the 1924 immigration law, and World War II) for their answers. Students also should use the lists they made while watching the films and information from the Holocaust Encyclopedia article to inform their answers. You can find the Answer Key here.

6. Instruct students in their groups to read the Excerpts from Klaus Langer’s Diary and discuss why Klaus might have decided to keep a diary.

ASK STUDENTS TO USE THEIR WORKSHEETS AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS:

- Summarize the main points of each diary entry
- What does each entry reveal about the different challenges facing Klaus’s family as they attempted to leave Germany?
- What can we learn about the emigration and immigration experience from his diary, and does it differ from what we learned from the historical documents we just examined?
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CONCLUSION

WRAP UP

7. Hold a class discussion to conclude the lesson.

ASK THE STUDENTS

- What did you learn about emigration/immigration during the 1930s?
- What surprised you about the documents, including the diary, that you analyzed? How did the documents you analyzed change your prior assumptions about this topic?
- What does Klaus’s diary show us about how refugees experienced the immigration process?
- What made the immigration process difficult?
- How did government policies, public opinion, and global events affect the ability of Jews to flee from the German Reich to the United States in the 1930s and 1940s?

ASSESSMENT

The prompt below may be assigned to facilitate a discussion at the end of the lesson. Consider assigning other projects (student essays, or individual or group visual presentations) to assess learning.

Student Prompt:
Based on Klaus Langer’s diary, your notes from both of the films, and historical documents in the PDFs, evaluate the challenges faced by Jews attempting to flee the German Reich and immigrate to the United States. Providing evidence from primary sources (government documents and Klaus Langer’s diary) and secondary sources (Encyclopedia articles, Path to Nazi Genocide and Newsreel film), answer the following questions:
- How did anti-Jewish policies, laws and actions influence Jewish emigration from the German Reich?
- How did American domestic concerns influence the ability of Jews to immigrate to the United States?

Consider the impact of government policies, public opinion, and global events in the 1920s and 1930s when formulating your response.