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# A Time to Speak
# Helen Lewis

## About the book

Helen Lewis, a Jewish dancer who lived in Prague under Nazi occupation, was deported to the Theresienstadt Ghetto and then to Auschwitz. In her memoir, she speaks of how her dance training and talent assisted her survival.

## About the author

Helen Lewis was born in Czechoslovakia in 1917. A dancer from a young age and later a dance teacher, she was deported to the Theresienstadt and later to the Nazi death camp Auschwitz. She took part in enforced Christmas concert for Nazi guards in the camp – an act which saved her life. Helen was liberated from a death march from Auschwitz in 1945 by Russian soldiers. Helen rebuilt her life in Belfast, remarried and had children. She continued to teach dance to students. Helen passed away in January 2010.

## Discussion Questions

Please note that some of these questions will act as spoilers for the book.

1. Helen tells us how she had to be smuggled into dance rehearsals and classes in Prague. Why do you think that she ran the risk of doing this?

2. Helen talks about the "dreadful finality" (pg 63) in the act of having a number tattooed on her arm at Auschwitz. What do you think she meant by this?

3. Why did Helen and Mitzi become friends? What impact would this relationship have on Helen's survival?

4. Do you think that being known as "The Dancer" helped Helen survive?

5. What do you think that Kostja's letter said?

6. Helen rebuilt her life in Northern Ireland after liberation, and continued her career as a dance teacher. Do you think that this was a difficult decision for her to make?

You can use HMD resources to find out more about Auschwitz http://www.hmd.org.uk/genocides/the-holocaust/life-in-the-camps or about Helen Lewis: http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/dance