

History – All of a sudden the atmosphere changed (Primary)

Aim: To enable students to understand how objects from the past can provide a **Legacy of Hope** for the future.

Provide pairs of students with a copy of the ‘This is your life’ illustration (found at the back of this case study) and a pile of post-it-notes. **Explain** that the illustration comes from the first page of an autograph book and that the pictures were drawn by a father for his daughter.

Ask what these pictures tell us about this person’s life?

Challenge the students to identify each drawing and explain its relevance, sticking a post-it-note beside the appropriate picture. **Invite** them to share their ideas with the rest of the class. (At this stage, do not provide any interpretation of the drawings, this version is available for your reference at the end of this document.)

Next, **provide** each pair of students with photographs A and B. **Ask** them to look closely at the photographs, using this information to find out further details about the person’s life.

Finally, **hand out** the extract entitled ‘Early Life’. **Ask** the students to underline five things that they think were important to this young person. **Invite** each pair of students to share their ideas with the rest of the class. Together, begin to create a thought shower of this girl’s early life.

Explain that the autograph book belongs to Dorothy Fleming (born Dorli Oppenheimer). Dorothy lived a happy life in Vienna until Adolf Hitler came into Austria in 1938. From this point onwards, things started to change. **Read aloud** the following extract, where Dorothy recalls what happened at school:

“First of all, the teacher made all the Jewish pupils, including me, sit at the back of the class, facing the wall. Then she told the other girls not to speak to us. Up to then, no one had paid any special attention to our religion. This sudden separation was hurtful and hard to understand. After a short time, she told the girls to listen carefully at home and report any nasty remarks they overheard. She was making children spy on their families. Then, after summer 1938, Jewish children were no longer allowed to attend ordinary schools and my education stopped.

There was even a change in the atmosphere at home. Grim faces seemed to replace smiles; silence took over from noise and laughter. The talk was all about permits and visas, people who had managed to escape, and what we would do now that the Nazis had taken over Daddy’s shops.”

As a class, **compile** a list of the ways in which Dorothy’s life began to change, both at home and at school.

- Which ‘change’ do you think was the hardest to accept?

- How is this part of Dorothy's life different from what you saw in the autograph book?
- What decisions do you think the family were able to make about their future?

Discuss the situation in Austria and outline the choices that were available to the family. **Explain** how, at a time when everything was looking hopeless, Dorothy's parents heard about the *Kindertransport*, the special trains that would bring children to safety in England. A young Jewish couple, Theo and Tilly Hall, offered to give both Dorothy and her sister Lisi a foster home until their parents could join them.

Before she left Austria, Dorothy asked her family and friends to write in an autograph book. Her father wrote the first entry – a 'This is your life' of Dorothy's ten years in Vienna.

Ask why students think Dorothy's father chose these particular pictures? What do they tell us about the memories he wanted Dorothy to have?

Explain that Dorothy's father chose to focus on happier times in Vienna and he wanted his daughter to remain optimistic about the future. When Dorothy was alone in England, her autograph book would be a source of comfort and also a positive reminder of her past. This was his **Legacy of Hope** for his daughter.

Using the 'This is your life information sheet', **talk** the students through the different episodes in Dorothy's life.

Tell them that Dorothy was reunited with her parents in 1941. She was extremely lucky because most of the Kinder who came to England never saw their parents again.

Activity 1

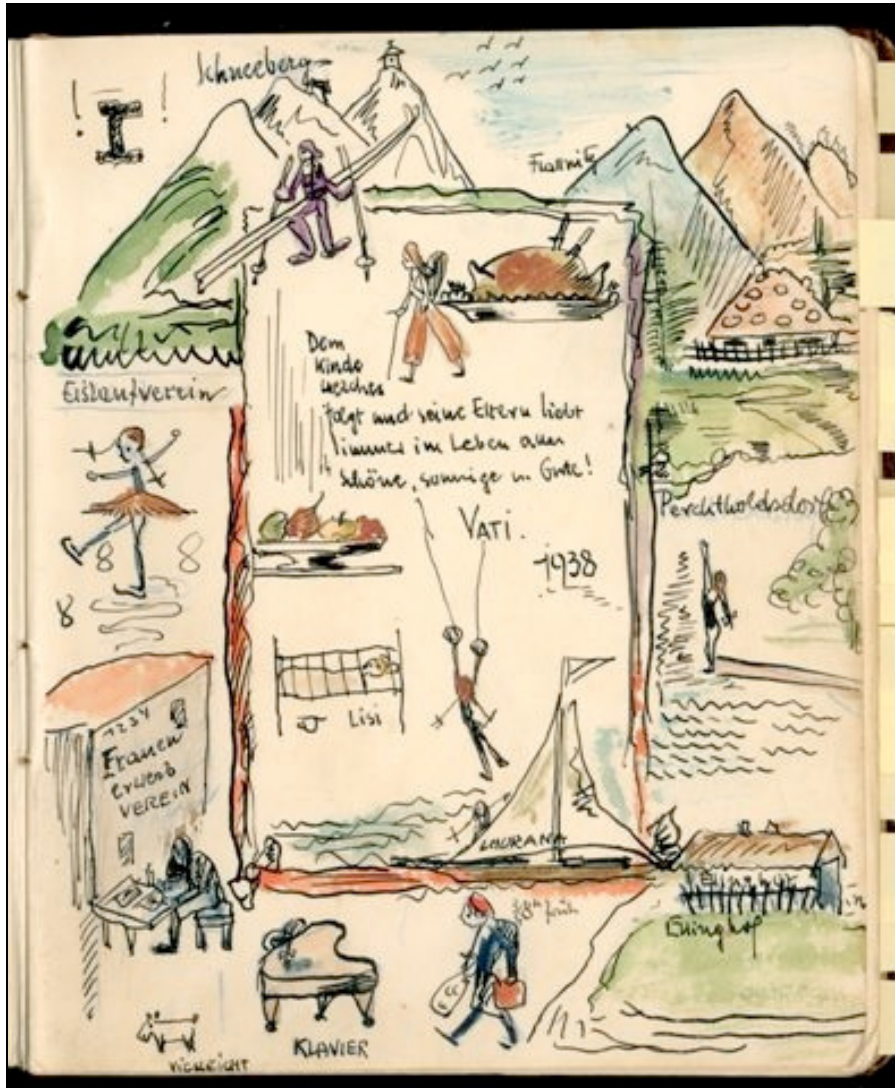
Ask the students to imagine how they would feel if they had to leave England and go to live in a new country with strangers. **Invite** them to design a 'This is your life' for their parents which will serve as a reminder of the past and provide comfort and hope for the future.

Activity 2

Describe how, when children leave primary school, they often ask their friends and teachers to sign a shirt or autograph book, sharing their memories and/or giving a message for the future. **Invite** the children to design their own 'This is your life' for a friend, showing happy times that they have shared.

Dorothy's autograph book is part of her **Legacy of Hope**. It illustrates happier times in Vienna and is a constant reminder to us all of the thriving Jewish life that existed in Austria and in many other countries before Nazi occupation. Dorothy is a regular speaker at The Holocaust Centre and tells her story to children and adults in the hope that they will remember and learn from the past. By thinking about Dorothy today, students have shared in the **Legacy of Hope** for Holocaust Memorial Day 2010. They can encourage others to do the same by telling them all they have heard about Dorothy and her autograph book.

“This is Your Life” illustration



© Dorothy Fleming

Early Life

Early Life

I was born in 1928 in Vienna, Austria, and I was almost ten years old when Hitler joined Austria onto Germany. Several generations of our family had lived in Vienna. We lived in a big flat and my father owned two optician's shops. He was also very good at telling jokes and doing magic tricks! My mother was a very active lady: she sang in a choir, played the violin and did dancing and gymnastics.

I lived a very happy life with my parents and younger sister. I loved reading, dancing, gymnastics and helping with the cooking, and at weekends we used to go swimming, skiing, ice-skating and walking in the woods. I had a fantastic rocking horse with a real mane and tail, and I particularly remember the marvellous birthday parties that my mother organised. We had our own little puppet theatre and she used to put on a Punch and Judy show for us. I loved languages and had private English lessons from the age of seven – but I'm sure my parents had no idea how important this would turn out to be!

My family was Jewish, but not particularly religious; we didn't go to the synagogue regularly, but I remember going with my grandfather at special festival times. We had both Jewish and non-Jewish friends.

Extract reproduced from:

Wendy Whitworth, ed., *Journeys: Children of the Holocaust Tell Their Stories*, Quill Press in association with The Holocaust Centre, 2009.

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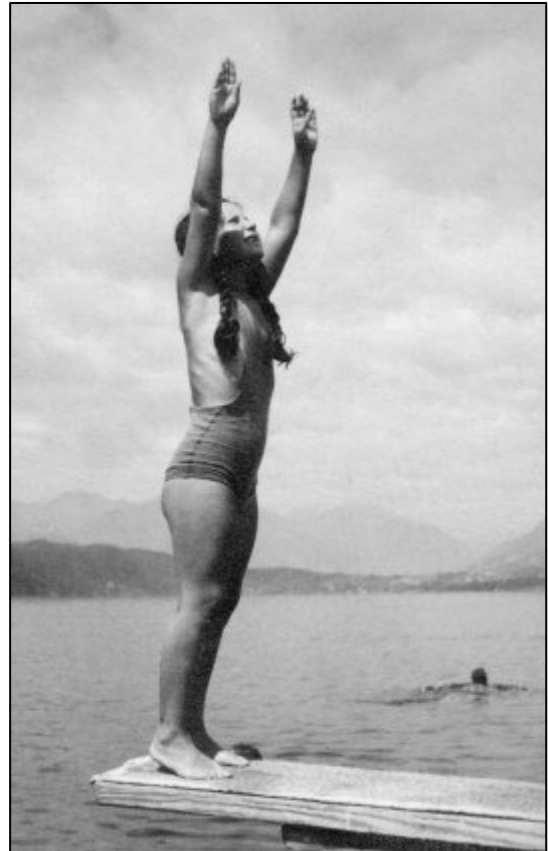
Resource Material

Photo A



© Dorothy Fleming

Photo B



© Dorothy Fleming

*Dorothy's journey to England can be explored in more depth by reading *Journeys: Children of the Holocaust Tell their Stories*, ed. Wendy Whitworth, Quill Press, 2009. Available from The Holocaust Centre, this book contains thirty brief testimonies of child survivors of the Holocaust. It has been specially written for 10-11-year-old children and designed to complement 'The Journey', the UK's first primary school exhibition about the Holocaust. It is a unique volume covering the whole range of children's experiences – as refugees and Kinder, as hidden children, or surviving in the ghettos and concentration camps.*

For further information about 'The Journey', visit the website at www.holocaustcentre.net

For Teachers' Use only

In Austria, there were 4 grades given by the teacher:

- 1 - excellent
- 2 - satisfactory
- 3 - only just good enough
- 4 - fail

The grades were given in Roman numerals and here, Dorothy's father has given her a 'I' for skiing

Dorothy skating. She used to skate where Sonia Henie (Norwegian Olympic Gold Medallist 1928, 1932 and 1936) practised. The area was allocated behind scarlet rope for Sonia and everyone wanted to be like her.

Dorothy working hard at school and doing her homework. School finished about 1pm so she had homework to do in the afternoon.

A dog with the word 'vickeicht', meaning 'perhaps' as Dorothy had always wanted a dog.

Fruit, which Dorothy loved

Lisi in her cot with a potty under it!

Dorothy walking to school at 07:45

Dorothy on the grand piano, which she was learning to play

Dorothy with her rucksack

Chicken, a special treat

Hiking in the mountains

"To the child who is obedient and loves her parents, always in life everything beautiful, sunny and good. Father 1938"

Dorothy on the gym rings

Dorothy swimming in Italy

Sailing in Italy

This represents the residential (summer) camp that Dorothy used to go to. This possibly helped her when she came to England, as it was not the first time she had been away from home

