



The English German Girl

Jake Wallis Simons

About the book

Rosa Klein is a young Jewish girl growing up in Berlin in the 1930s. Her father, Otto, is a successful doctor and her brother and sister enjoy going to school and playing.

The story begins as the Nazis start to ban Jews from certain professions. Otto finds his patients being taken away from him and his ability to practice diminished, until he is banned from practicing medicine at all. We see the family start to disintegrate as each member becomes increasingly forced out of society. Heinrich, Rosa's older brother, becomes involved in the young Jewish group Maccabi Hatzair and violent clashes with the Nazi Youth leave his parents scared for his safety.

As the family's circumstances worsen, it becomes apparent that they must leave Berlin. The book details the difficulties many Jews had in finding foreign visas to escape Germany before the declaration of war. As the Kleins become ever more desperate to find an escape route, they finally agree to sending their young daughter on a Kindertransport to England in the hope that she will be able to secure working visas for her family from abroad.

Rosa seeks shelter with her aunt and uncle in London, and the story goes on to describe how Rosa grows up, falls in love, and deals with the separation from her family and trauma of not knowing their fate.

About the author

Jake Wallis Simons is a writer, journalist and broadcaster. He grew up in an Orthodox Jewish family in the United Kingdom, and wrote this novel at least in part to explore concepts of identity for those who emigrated on the *Kindertransport*. He has described writing the book as one of the feats of his life he's most proud of.

Key Themes

People are not all good or bad

- Rosa's childhood nurse, who she loved dearly and who was accepted as part of the family, tries to turn Rosa over to rioters on Kristallnacht
- the Chief of Police aims to protect the Kleins, and stops the central synagogue in Berlin from being destroyed. However, as Chief of Police, he faces strong pressure to persecute those who the Nazi government seek to destroy
- Rosa's Aunt Mimi forces Rosa to have an abortion after she becomes pregnant by her cousin. Later in the book, she explains that she did this through concern for Rosa.

Personal identity

- Rosa's British family cannot communicate with Rosa when she first arrives, and this language barrier makes it difficult for her to think of them as family
- when Rosa is evacuated to Norfolk, she's careful to disguise her accent so that other young British people don't think she's a Nazi
- when Rosa becomes a nurse in later life, she pretends to be Dutch to avoid accusations of being a Nazi

Responsibility

- the young Rosa feels responsible for protecting her family back in Germany and tirelessly works to find them a visa
- while on the Kindertransport, Rosa finds an unattended baby who she cares for until they arrive at London Liverpool Street Station. Later on, she attempts to find and care for this baby
- Rosa becomes a very hard-working nurse and aims to help the men in 'manly' jobs like firefighting

You can use our resources to find out more about the Kindertransport at:

>> [Kindertransport and Refugees](#)

>> [Hannah's Kindertransport story 'Let One Go Free'](#)

>> [Listen to Liesel Carter, a Kindertransportee](#)