



# UK-JHF Lesson

University of Kentucky-Jewish Heritage Fund  
Holocaust Education Initiative

## Lesson Title:

**The Holocaust and US Immigration:  
an Oral History Analysis**

## Lesson Overview

<b>Suggested Grade Level</b>	11th-12th
<b>Time Required</b>	50-75 min.
<b>Subject</b>	U.S. History
<b>Relevant Courses</b>	U.S. History, Human Geography
<b>Kentucky Curriculum Standard(s) Addressed</b>	<b>HS.UH.CH.1:</b> Examine the ways diverse groups viewed themselves and contributed to the identity of the United States in the world from 1877-present.
<b>Summary/Rationale</b>	<p>While the study of a historical theme, event, or question requires multiple sources to develop breadth of understanding, oral histories help students consider the impact of these events on individuals. The pain, oppression, antisemitism, and violence of the Holocaust resulted in the forced mobility of millions of people during the 1930 and 1940s. Oral histories from Holocaust survivors can illuminate some of the individual stories of human movement and how that influenced their lives and identities.</p> <p>This 1-2 class period lesson invites students to consider the concepts like refugee, immigration (and immigration policies), assimilation, community, and exclusion through the critical reading of an oral history from a Holocaust survivor now residing in Kentucky.</p>
<b>Featured Materials/Content</b>	<p>This lesson utilizes a 14-minute excerpt of an oral history interview provided by Dr. Alice Dreifuss Goldstein in 2019. Dreifuss Goldstein discusses her family's experience arriving in the United States as German Jewish refugees after escaping Nazi persecution in Kenzingen, Germany.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Shortened Interview</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Longer Video Interview</a></li></ul>
<b>Essential Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does the experience of a German Jewish family forced to flee to the United States during the 1930s inform our understanding of immigration in the context of US history?</li><li>• What is assimilation? Why might the expectation that immigrants assimilate be problematic?</li><li>• How do individual stories help us learn more about the diverse identity of the United States during the first half of the twentieth century?</li><li>• How are immigrants, especially refugees who are forced to flee their homes, impacted by the complex and, often, traumatic experiences that come with relocation?</li></ul>

<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<p><i>After this lesson, students will be able to . . .</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify how antisemitic policies influenced American identity in the 1930s through the arrival of increased numbers of German Jewish refugees.</li> <li>• Relate broader themes of US immigration policy to a case study of a single family shared through oral history.</li> <li>• Analyze an individual's experience as an immigrant to the United States during the Holocaust.</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher Planning and Research</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Preview the oral history interview of Dr. Alice Dreifuss Goldstein (27 minutes)</li> <li>2. Read the US Holocaust Memorial Museum's Holocaust Encyclopedia entry titled "<a href="#">Immigration to the United States, 1933-41</a>." Develop a mini-lecture using that source to provide context for this oral history activity.</li> <li>3. Optional: Watch the longer video interview of Dreifuss Goldstein.</li> </ol>
<b>Lesson Created By</b>	<p><b>Jill Abney</b>, Center for the Enhancement of Learning &amp; Teaching (CELT) University of Kentucky</p>

# During the Lesson

## Instructional Sequence

### 1. Opening individual reflection:

Ask students to reflect silently on a time where they felt like an outsider. Ask them to consider what caused them to feel that way and how they responded. No sharing required.

### 2. Introduction and contextualization:

Introduce the lesson through a 15-20 minute mini lecture highlighting some details about US immigration policies during the 1930s and linking the coming activity to previous content. Consider using the USHMM's "[Immigration to the United States, 1931-1944](#)" Holocaust Encyclopedia entry to provide important context. Define what an oral history is if this is a new concept to your students.

### 3. Establishing prior knowledge:

"We can study the policies and historical trends of immigration, as well as the factors that push and pull individuals to relocate. But we also need to consider individual stories and experiences to truly understand how diverse groups contributed to the identity of the United States at any given time period."

#### Discussion question:

What prior knowledge do you have about experiences of immigrants to the US in the first half of the twentieth century?

*(Collect answers on the board or a shared virtual note-taking space.)*

### 4. Lead-in to oral history activity:

"One way to explore individual experiences is through oral histories - interviews of folks who lived through certain times and events. Immigrants can have vastly different experiences based on their identities, the circumstances that led them to immigrate, the location they have related to, and many other factors so it is important to consider several different sources of information to gain a better understanding of this diverse history. Today we are going to use the oral history interview of one Holocaust survivor now living in Kentucky to deepen our knowledge of the interwar period in the United States, analyze the complexities of the immigrant experience, and consider how diverse peoples contributed to the identity of the US in the first half of the twentieth century."

### 5. Oral history activity:

- a. Briefly summarize the first 13 minutes of the interview, stating that Alice Dreifuss Goldstein was a eight year-old girl from Kenzingen, Germany whose family fled persecution of the Nazis in 1939. The family faced increasing isolation in their hometown and went through a very complex process to escape to the United States. "We will listen to a 14-minute excerpt of an interview she does with her daughter Beth in 2019. Please read along on the interview transcript and note any questions you have as we listen."
- b. As we listen, also consider these **guiding questions**:
  - i. What challenges did she and her family face as they tried to connect to a new community in their new home?

- ii. How would you describe the journey Alice shared?
    - iii. What impact did the experience of being an immigrant have on her as a child?
  - c. Listen to the audio together as a class.
  - d. Handout the graphic organizer and break students into small groups.
  - e. Looking back over the transcript, complete the graphic organizer to analyze some of the guiding questions about exploring an example of an immigrant's experience in the US during the Interwar and WWII era.
- 6. Drawing conclusions:**  
Bring students back together as a large group and invite them to share some of what their groups discussed. Return to the guiding questions above.
- 7. Closing reflection exit ticket:**  
Have students write on a piece of paper for two minutes a response to the following questions:
- a. How does Alice's story inform your understanding of immigration to the United States?
  - b. What were some new things you learned as a result of her story?

## Assessment(s)

- Graphic organizer for analysis of the text
- Small and large group discussions
- Exit ticket reflections

## Links to Necessary Resources and Handouts

- Shorter Interview: [Link to interview](#)
- Longer Interview: [Link to longer interview](#) (for additional activities)
- Handout 1: [Transcript for interview](#)
- Handout 2: [Graphic organizer handout](#) (or share with students as an example and invite them to create their own)

# Following Up and Additional Resources

## Suggested Modification for Accommodation

- **Accessibility of the text** - The oral history comes with a complete transcript for students. Provide the printed transcript of the interview excerpt to all students and allow students who prefer or need to access the interview solely by reading it to do so.
- **Large group activities** - Use a marker board and post-its to allow the entire class to work together on the analysis activity.
- **Variable means of demonstrating learning** - Consider allowing students to choose their preferred modality of demonstrating their analysis.
- **Extension** - If more class time is available, students could design their own graphic organizers, infographics, or presentations to visually represent their analysis and thought processes. Students could also listen to more of the interview than the required clip to gain a better sense of the reasons the interviewee was forced to flee home. Students interested in researching the topic further can listen to more of the audio interview or the longer video interview. See additional resources for other extensions.

## Additional Resources

- For expansion/extension activities, consider inviting students to analyze more recent accounts of refugee/displaced person stories and compare/contrast those experiences with Dreifuss Goldstein's. For example, consider Nasro's story featured in the 2013 film [Brave Girl Rising](#). You can also find a [mini-lesson about the film featured on Facing History and Ourselves](#).

## Cross-Curricular Connections

- For an opportunity to link learning experiences across grade levels, invite teachers of World History in your school to explore how they might create their own lesson featuring an earlier portion of Dreifuss Goldstein's interview. Portions of that interview can help students explore the interwar period in Europe as they highlight her family's experiences in 1930s Germany that led them to flee the country.

## Citations

*Brave Girl Rising* documentary film (2019) directed by Richard E. Robbins & Martha Adams, *Girl Rising*. (accessed November 23, 2022). <https://girlrising.org/documentaries/brave-girl-rising-film/watch>

Goldstein, Alice Dreifuss, interview by Beth Goldstein. April 27, 2019, Jewish Kentucky Oral History Project, Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky Libraries. <https://www.kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7dg60sjg3kj>

Goldstein, Alice Dreifuss, interview by Beth Goldstein. April 17, 2019, Jewish Kentucky Oral History Project, Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky Libraries. <https://www.kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7c1snxcc09k>

"Immigration to the United States, 1933-1941," *Holocaust Encyclopedia*.. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC. (accessed November 23, 2022). <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/immigration-to-the-united-states-1933-41>