**Why didn’t the Jews leave Germany? A Holocaust lesson plan focused on German & Austrian emigration.  
Grade Level: 8-12 Subject: History or ELA Time: 3-5 periods (45 minutes)**  
**NOTE:** This lesson is a revision of David H Lindquist’s lesson plan from “Avoiding the Complex History, Simple Answer Syndrome: A Lesson Plan for Providing Depth and Analysis in the High School History Classroom.” *The History Teacher*, May 2012. Linked on <https://echoesandreflections.org/articles-and-essays/>   
  
<https://echoesandreflections.org/wp-content/themes/twentysixteenechoes/fileview.php?source=1&file_nm=2017/07/Avoiding-the-Complex-History-Simple-Answer-Syndrome.pdf>

**Teacher Preparation:** Lindquist’s article provides excellent rationale and historical context for this lesson.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Learners will identify the “push factors”—events and pressures that motivate people to consider leaving their homes—that sparked Jewish emigration from Germany and Austria in the 1930’s.
2. Learners will identify the social and political factors that made it difficult for German and Austrian Jews to find countries willing to issue immigration visas to them.
3. Learners will analyze information from reliable sources, deducing answers to the following questions:
   1. What documentation was required for Jews to emigrate from Germany and Austria?
   2. What documentation was required for immigration visas to the United States?
4. Learners will construct a concept map, table, or list of their own questions regarding emigration from Germany and immigration to another country.   
   These are examples of questions students should ask—if necessary, prompted by the teacher:
   * What were German and Austrian Jews able to do with property—business, investments, home, furniture, art, china, silver, jewelry? Could property be taken out of Nazi-controlled territory? Could it be sold at a fair price before leaving?
   * What would Jews do with their pets before leaving?
   * How would a Jewish family decide where to go? Which would be the best destinations? Which countries will let Jews immigrate? (Think historically! Don’t use knowledge that Jews didn’t have at the time they were making their decisions.)
   * Would all the members of a Jewish family agree about what to take and what to leave behind? How would the members of a family ultimately decide what to take with them?
   * How would Jews arrange and pay for transportation?
   * Would Jews consider going to a country where they didn’t know the language, laws, customs, and where it would be difficult to practice Judaism? Why or why not?
   * What would Jews do for employment in their new country—especially if they don’t know the language, laws, and customs.
   * What if elderly family members would not or could not leave?
   * What if some members of the family could get visas but not everyone? Should anyone go? Who should go? Why?

Note that the purpose of such questions is to grapple with the complex factors of the decision to emigrate—to leave homes where families had often lived for many generations. The point of asking the questions is not necessarily to answer them. There were no straightforward, simple answers.

1. Learners will defend—with prepared arguments in class discussion or Socratic seminar—the contrapositive of this lesson’s thematic question: **Given the obstacles, how was it possible that so many Jews did leave Germany and Austria before WWII began?**

**Holocaust Lesson Student Guide** Name:  
***Why didn’t the Jews leave Germany?*** Course:  
 Hour: Date:

# Objective One: I can identify the “push factors”—events and pressures that motivate people to consider leaving their homes—that sparked Jewish emigration from Germany and Austria in the 1930’s.

* Watch the video “From Citizens to Outcasts” (7:28 mins) from USHMM. <https://www.ushmm.org/learn/holocaust/path-to-nazi-genocide/chapter-3/from-citizens-to-outcasts-1933-1938>
* Scroll through the events of 1933-1939 on the Timeline of the Holocaust at Echoes & Reflections. Notice and click on events that specifically affected Jews and might have caused them to consider leaving their homes.  
  <https://timelineoftheholocaust.org/>
* **Take Notes:** Identify the “push factors”—the events, social and economic pressures—described in the sources above that motivated German and Austrian Jews to consider leaving their homeland.

**Holocaust Lesson** **Student Guide** Name:  
***Why didn’t the Jews leave Germany?*** Page 2

# Objective Two: I can identify the social and political factors that made it difficult for German and Austrian Jews to find countries willing to issue immigration visas to them.

* Watch the video “Why Didn’t They Just Leave: Challenges of Escape” (12:51 mins) from USHMM.  
  <https://www.ushmm.org/teach/holocaust-lesson-plans/challenges-of-escape-1938-1941>
* Read “German Jewish Refugees, 1933-1939” from USHMM’s *Holocaust Encyclopedia*. Watch Kurt Klein’s testimony embedded within this article.   
  <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-jewish-refugees-1933-1939>
* Read “Emigration and the Evian Conference” from USHMM’s *Holocaust Encyclopedia*.  
  <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/emigration-and-the-evian-conference>
* **Take Notes:** Identify the social and political factors described in the sources above that made it difficult for German and Austrian Jews to find countries willing to issue immigration visas to them.

**Holocaust Lesson Student Guide** Name:  
***Why didn’t the Jews leave Germany?*** Page 3

**Objective 3: I can analyze information from reliable sources, deducing answers to the questions:  
 What documentation was required for Jews to emigrate from Germany and Austria?  
 What documentation was required for immigration visas to the United States?**

* Analyze “Documentation Required for Emigration from Germany” from USHMM. In addition to documents, note how much money a German or Austrian Jew could take out of the country—after possibly selling a business, home, and possessions. (Convert 1937 Reichsmarks into US dollars. You may also want to convert 1937 dollars into today’s dollars.)

[www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20020516-documentation-required-emigration-germany.pdf](http://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20020516-documentation-required-emigration-germany.pdf) AND  
<https://www.measuringworth.com/datasets/exchangeglobal/result.php?year_source=1900&year_result=2000&countryE%5B%5D=Germany>

* Analyze “Challenges of Escape, 1938-1941: Steps to Immigrate to the United States” from USHMM.  
  [www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/USHMM-Challenges-of-Escape-1938-1941.pdf](http://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/USHMM-Challenges-of-Escape-1938-1941.pdf)
* Analyze these excerpts from Klaus Langer’s diary about his family’s efforts to emigrate from Germany.   
  [www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/USHMM-Challenges-of-Escape-Langer-diary.pdf](http://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/USHMM-Challenges-of-Escape-Langer-diary.pdf)
* Organize the key ideas you have deduced from your analysis of the texts onto the following table:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What documentation was required for Jews to emigrate from Germany and Austria? | What documentation was required for immigration visas to the United States? |
|  |  |

**Holocaust Lesson Student Guide** Name:  
***Why didn’t the Jews leave Germany?*** Page 4

**Objective Four: I can construct a concept map, table, or list of my own questions regarding emigration from Germany and immigration to another country.**

* Construct a concept map, table, or list of your own questions regarding emigration from Germany or Austria and immigration to another country. You might consider questions that would arise from the point-of-view of a Jew considering leaving their homeland. **Please note that you are not expected to answer the questions you generate**. Feel free to use a larger sheet of paper or attach additional sheets for this portion of the assignment. A couple example questions have been listed below to get you started:
  + What were German and Austrian Jews able to do with property—business, investments, home, furniture, art, china, silver, jewelry? Could property be taken out of Nazi-controlled territory? Could it be sold at a fair price before leaving?
  + What if some members of the family could get visas but not everyone? Should anyone go? Who should go? Why?

**Holocaust Lesson Student Guide** Name:  
***Why didn’t the Jews leave Germany?*** Page 5

**Objective Five: I can defend—with prepared arguments in class discussion or Socratic seminar—the contrapositive of this lesson’s thematic question:** **Given the obstacles, how was it possible that so many Jews did leave Germany and Austria before WWII began?**

* Using everything learned in this lesson, defend—in writing—the contrapositive of this lesson’s thematic question: **Given the obstacles, how was it possible that so many Jews did leave Germany and Austria before WWII began?**
* Prepare for and give oral arguments in class discussion or Socratic seminar on the topic of German and Austrian Jewish emigration during the 1930’s.