

# Love & Separation: Hold On to Your Music



## TOPIC

Listening & Speaking  
Social Awareness

## GRADE LEVEL

K-2

## DURATION

2 Part Lesson  
(40-45min. per section)

## SUBJECT AREA

English/Language Arts  
Social-Emotional Learning  
Primary Holocaust Education

## DESCRIPTION OF THE LESSON

This activity prepares students for reading aloud the book, *Hold On to Your Music: The Inspiring True Story of the Children of Willesden Lane*. The story is about the life of pianist Lisa Jura, and exemplifies the themes of love, separation, courage and hope through music. Students will identify things that they love and discuss the concept of separation and reflect on a time they have been away from someone they love. Next, students will watch and analyze the testimony of Vera Gissing and consider how her experience on the Kindertransport involved family separation, identifying the tangible and intangible gifts her parents imparted to her that helped her in facing this challenge. Students will then participate in a guided picture walk of the book to predict what the story is about and make connections to their own lives.

## STANDARDS ADDRESSED

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaboration with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

### CASEL Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Framework

Social Awareness- Core Competency Area

The abilities to understand the perspectives of and emphasize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.

## MATERIALS

- Children's Book, *Hold On to Your Music: The Inspiring True Story of Children of Willesden Lane* by Mona Golabek and Lee Cohen
- "Clair de Lune," played by Mona Golabek (audio file)
- Clip of Testimony – Vera Gissing (3:00 min)
- Biography – Vera Gissing (included in this PDF)
- Map of Kindertransport Routes (included in this PDF)
- Brief History: Kindertransport (included in this PDF)
- Pictures from book [cover, Lisa playing piano in basement, parents at train station (included in this PDF)]
- Picture Walk Preview Student Handout PDF
- Pen/Pencil, Crayons, Markers

## LEARNING AIMS

As a result of this lesson, students will...

- Analyze primary and secondary sources to assess the historical details of the Kindertransport and the consequences leading to family separation
- Predict what the story is about using key details from the illustrations to support their ideas and draw connections to their own lives

## Consider

**Essential Question Discussion** Let students know that they will be reading a story later about the life of pianist Lisa Jura, and throughout this lesson, they will consider the topics of love, separation, courage, and hope, which are key themes in the story, *Hold On to Your Music: The Inspiring True Story of Children of Willesden Lane* by Mona Golabek and Lee Cohen.

**Self-Reflection** Draw a heart on the board. Ask students to think about the many different things that this symbol represents. Have student volunteers share their ideas with the class.



Ask students to think about: What things do you love (e.g., interests, people, pets, hobbies, talents)? Have them take turns sharing with a partner 3-5 things that they love.

**Musical Experience** Tell students that in the story, *Hold On to Your Music*, the main character Lisa loves her music and is a very gifted pianist. Play “Clair de Lune” (played by Mona Golabek) for them to listen to. Ask students to think about how the music makes them feel.

What does hearing this music make you think about?

What mood does this music represent to you? How so?

Next ask students to share how they have seen the word “separation” used. Chart student ideas (e.g., cooking, school, friendship, family).

Next, ask students to think about the following questions to discuss with a partner:

Have you ever been away from or separated from someone you love?

If so, how did it feel?

What did you do to make yourself feel better?

How did that help you?

Tell students they will see examples of separation and love throughout our lesson today.

## Collect

**Exploring the Historical Context** Tell students that they will watch a clip of testimony from Vera Gissing who had to leave her home in the Czechoslovakia and travel by train on the *Kindertransport* to reach safety in Great Britain. Explain to students that Vera was saved by a special program called the Kindertransport that protected Jewish children who were in danger. She shares her personal story from the Kindertransport and the subsequent separation from her family.

Have students read the *Brief History: Kindertransport* resource independently or read it aloud to them. Answer any questions that they may have about the information.

**Map (Setting)** Show the route of Vera's journey on the Kindertransport. Ask students to help you locate the countries of Czechoslovakia and Great Britain, in relation to their own geographic location. Then, ask, students to share what they notice about the location of these two countries.

**Audiovisual Testimony** Have students read *Vera Gissing's biography*, or read it aloud to them and answer any questions they may have about the information. Then, have students watch the clip of testimony twice.

- **First Viewing** Have students watch and listen to Vera's clip of testimony. Afterwards, ask volunteers to summarize the story and answer clarifying questions.
- **Second Viewing** Play the clip again and ask students to pay attention any key details that give reasons for the separation and what her parents gave her before she left to help her with this separation.

**Partner/Share Discuss** Ask students to think about and discuss the following questions with a partner:

How do you think the gifts Vera's parents gave her and her sister helped them during difficult times?

How did the love Vera and her family have for each other help during these difficult times? How did it add to the difficulty of the situation?

In what ways do you think Vera showed courage during the separation from her family?

How was Vera's separation from her family similar to family separation you have had in your own life?

Have students share with the class what they learned from their discussions with a partner.

## Construct

**Picture Walk - Literacy Text Introduction:** This pre-reading activity has students use three pictures from the book to preview what the story is about and identify the characters, setting, plot, vocabulary and themes using the following steps:

- Display the book cover and read the title. Ask students what they think the book might be about based on the title and pictures (e.g., going on a trip, playing music).
- Show the the picture of Lisa playing piano in the basement and ask if the picture adds any information to what was learned from the cover (e.g., plays the piano).
- **Ask questions** Next, share the picture of Lisa and her parents at the train station, use the familiar question words—who, what where, when, why, which, how—to ask questions about the pictures, such as:

Who are the people in the pictures?

Where do you think the story is taking place?

What is happening in the story?

When did the story take place?

How do you think the story is going to end?

What genre do you think this story is?

How do you think it connects to the ideas of love and separation?

- Remind students to support their ideas with evidence using key details from the book's illustrations and model this by giving an example of how you might support one of your own ideas using key visual details as evidence. (e.g., "I think she is saying goodbye to her parents—she and her parents both look sad, and she is the only one with a suitcase and there is a train behind her.")

**Picture Walk Preview** Ask students to complete the *Picture Walk Preview Student Handout*. Ask them to draw or write about 3 things they learned from the picture walk, make a prediction about the story, and identify a personal connection they made from the picture walk.

## Communicate

**Partner/Share/Discuss** Have students take turns and share their responses from the Picture Walk Preview with a partner. In what ways do you think the story will demonstrate love and/or separation?

Let students know that they will listen to the story read aloud in the next lesson and see how the predictions they made about the story turn out.

# Love & Separation: *Hold On to Your Music*

## Biography

### **Vera Gissing**

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**Vera Gissing** was born on July 4, 1928 in Prague, Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic). Vera attended a local Gymnasium (school) and had a sister, Eva, who was four years older. On March 15, 1939, the German armed forces took control of the city and subjected the family to brutal treatment because they were Jews. Without telling the rest of the family, Vera's mother put Vera and her sister Eva's names down on the list for Kindertransport: the organized movement of refugee children, mostly Jewish, from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia to Great Britain. Leaving in June 1939, the sisters were separated: Vera was placed in a foster family in Liverpool, and her sister Eva went to a school in Dorset. When the war ended in 1945, Vera found out that her parents died (her father died during the Holocaust and her mother died of typhoid only two days after they were freed). After the war, Vera went back to Prague to study and became a literary translator. Eventually, she moved back to England and married Michael Gissing in 1949. At the time of her interview, Vera had three children and three grandchildren. The interview was conducted on October 25, 1996 in Marlow, England, United Kingdom.



### **What was the Kindertransport?**

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The Kindertransport was a plan to rescue Jewish children from Greater Germany by train to the safety of Britain following Kristallnacht, The Night of Broken Glass. The first Kindertransport—or “children’s transport” arrived in England on December 2, 1930, with about two hundred children on board. The last train left Germany on September 1, 1939, just hours before World War II began. Over 10,000 children—about 7,500 who were Jewish—were saved because of the Kindertransport. After the war, many of the children became citizens of Great Britain or emigrated to other countries. Most of them would never see their parents again.



# Love & Separation: *Hold On to Your Music*

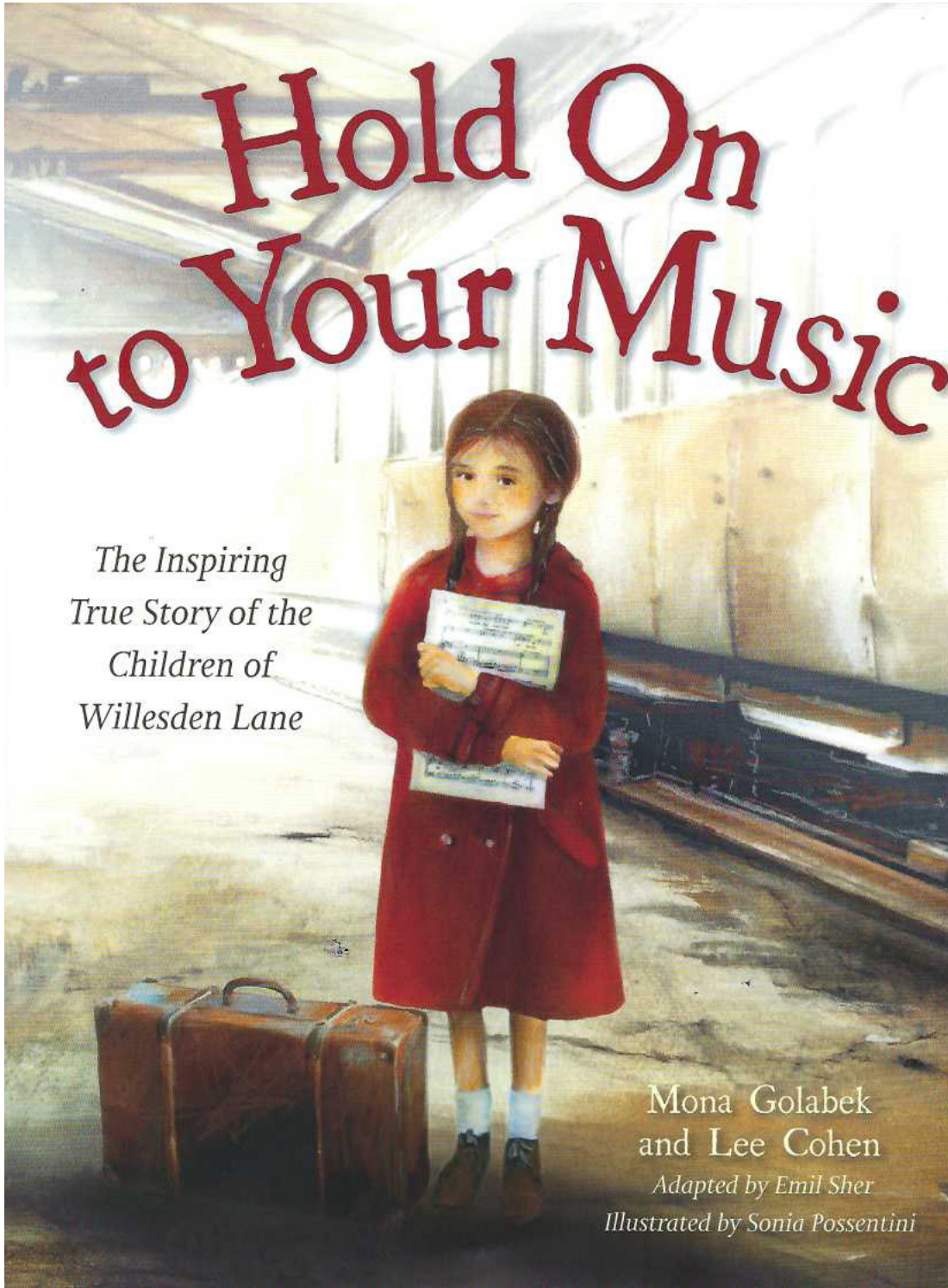
## Map of Kindertransport Routes

Prague, Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic) to London, England



**Love & Separation:  
Hold On to Your Music**

**Hold On to Your Music Cover**





Lesson

# Love & Separation: *Hold On to Your Music*

## *Hold On to Your Music Image*





**Love & Separation:  
Hold On to Your Music**

**Hold On to Your Music Image**

