

## Rescue and Survival in Hiding: Online Lesson

**Grade Level:** Appropriate for grades 6-12

**Subject:** Multidisciplinary

**Time Required:** 45-60 minutes

**Note:** It is appropriate for in-class or remote instruction.

**Overview:** This lesson focuses on the role that everyday objects play in our understanding of historical events. Using short videos about artifacts and photographs in the Museum's collections, students learn about the experiences of children and families who survived in hiding during the Holocaust, and they reflect upon how everyday objects may reveal aspects of their own experiences to future historians.

### Educational Outcomes:

Students learn how artifacts tell stories in history and in their personal lives by:

- Watching USHMM Curator's Corner episodes
- Selecting their own personal "artifact" and sharing the relevant story
- Classifying artifacts as either ordinary objects with special significance or as special objects created to fill a unique need

### Instructional sequence:

#### Teacher Note

There is additional information about the Curators Corner episodes on Page 3.

1. Students watch two or more of the following Curators Corner episodes:
  - a. [From Image to Rescue: The Gavra Mandil Collection](#)
  - b. [A Symbol of Hope: Louise Lawrence-Israel's Chair](#)
  - c. [A Cherished Object: Kristine Keren's Green Sweater](#)

- d. [Peter Feigl's Diary](#)
  - e. [One Survivor, Two Identities: The Kurt Lewin Collection](#)
  - f. [Risk and Resistance: The Elise Kann Jaeger Collection](#)
2. Post-viewing questions (to be answered either individually, via posts on a shared comment board, or group discussion via videoconference):
    - a. The artifacts, photographs, or documents featured in these episodes reveal information about the nature of rescue and survival during the Holocaust.
      - a. What actions did some people take to help Jews survive the Holocaust?
      - b. What resources did they need for their actions to succeed?
      - c. How did people in hiding cope with their situation?
      - d. What actions did they take in their struggle to survive?
      - e. Would you describe these objects as ordinary or extraordinary? Why? How do these objects symbolize more than their original purpose?
      - f. Why do you think the Museum is preserving these objects now for posterity?
  3. Students can read additional background information about children in hiding during the Holocaust in the Museum's Holocaust Encyclopedia - [Hidden Children During the Holocaust](#), [Hidden Children: Daily Life](#), [Hidden Children: Hardships](#), and [Le Chambon Sur Lignon](#).
  4. Assignment: Though it is not comparable to the Holocaust, historians will study the novel coronavirus pandemic of 2019-2020 and how society responded to it.
    - a. Ask students to choose one object, photograph, or document that they have used or produced during the coronavirus crisis that would tell future generations what their experience was like during this time. (This may include meaningful ways that individuals or groups helped each other during this time. Is there a single photo or object that illustrates/symbolizes these efforts? Explain how/why.)
    - b. Students explain why they chose this particular item.
      - i. What story does it tell?
      - ii. Did the importance of this object change for you as a result of how it was used during the pandemic?
    - c. If possible, the teacher may set up a shared online gallery into which students can upload pictures of their "artifacts" with brief descriptions of why they chose them.
  5. Concluding Discussion: What can we learn from history by studying everyday objects?

## TEACHER NOTES ABOUT CURATORS CORNER EPISODES

**From Image to Rescue: The Gavra Mandil Collection**

Moshe Mandil was a professional photographer from Novi Sad. His skills as a photographer and his photographs were instrumental in the survival of his family. The importance of Mandil's photography is epitomized by his use of a studio photograph of his children beside a Christmas tree which he brandished to convince German officials that the family was not Jewish.

While imprisoned in Pristina, Mr. Mandil endeared himself to Italian guards by taking their photographs, perhaps causing them to help his family escape in advance of an impending German invasion. The family fled to Tirana where Moshe was able to earn a living in a photo studio (working hidden behind a black cloth). His assistant at the studio was a Muslim teenager who took the entire Mandil family up to his home in the mountains where they survived hidden in relative safety.

Key quote:

“Of course we are not Jews. Look at this picture...”

In what different ways did Moshe Mandil's skill as a photographer and his photographs enable his family to survive in multiple situations?

**A Symbol of Hope: Louise Lawrence-Israel's Chair**

Louise Lawrence-Israel's celebrated her second birthday while her family was hiding in Amsterdam.

Key quote:

“It's not so easy to plan a birthday when you are in hiding... So my mother made a dress for me out of an old shirt. Selma made me a rag doll out of old pieces of material, and a very good friend of my father... came up with this chair...”

“I think that the chair meant hope for my parents.”

Why might the chair symbolize hope for Louise's parents? Despite cold and hunger, Louise reflects upon herself as a happy two year old. What does she credit for that? What does this reveal about the nature of resistance and survival?

Note: Louise Lawrence-Israels composed a [personal reflection](#) in 2008 in which she describes the life of the chair.

### **A Cherished Object: Kristine Keren's Green Sweater**

With the assistance of a sewer worker named Leopold Socha and two of his colleagues, Krystina Chiger (now Kristine Keren) and her family survived by hiding in the sewers of Lvov for 14 months..

Key quotes:

“You look at this sweater, and you think, ‘A seven year old child wore this in the sewers for 14 months...’”

“... the pattern was probably a pattern that her grandmother created herself and hand-knit. And so for Krystina, the sweater has a very emotional background, because it was something her grandmother had made for her.”

Krystina's sweater was important to her for many reasons. Can you think of at least two reasons she might have valued this article of clothing?

Note: Students who knit may create their own copy of Kristine Keren's sweater [using this pattern](#).

### **Peter Feigl's Diary**

Born in Berlin in 1929, Peter Feigl moved with his parents to Prague and Brussels before they ended up in southern France in 1940. In 1942, Peter was at a Quaker summer camp when his parents were arrested and deported to Auschwitz. Peter survived in hiding and eventually was sheltered by the people of Le Chambon sur Lignon.

Key quotes:

“... I dedicated the diary to my parents in the hope that I would see them again...”

“I pretty much recorded in this diary on a day-to-day basis what was happening to me.”

Why did his diary end abruptly on February 1, 1943? What does this reveal about the nature of life in hiding and risks faced by rescuers?

Why does Suzy Snyder say that Peter wanted to retrieve his diary when he learned of its existence after the war?

### **One Survivor, Two Identities: The Kurt Lewin Collection**

Kurt Lewin, son of the chief rabbi of Lvov, survived the Holocaust by hiding as a young monk. Documents he donated to the Museum show Lewin's changing identities before, during, and after his life in hiding.

Key quotes:

“As a Jew, he could not travel freely... he had to obtain a pass from the Germans. Normally, these passes identified him as Jewish in the first line. So, it would say ‘Der Jude Kurt Lewin’ (‘The Jew Kurt Lewin’) requests to travel from this place to this place on this day. If he was caught without his pass or if his pass had the wrong day on it, he could be arrested.”

“To go into hiding as a monk, you can't just walk in and say, ‘I'm a monk!’ You had to have identity papers for everything. Otherwise, you risked arrest. Immediately, they had to make false identification papers for Kurt as a novice monk. Clement actually hand-forged this document which is Kurt's baptismal certificate. He also couldn't go as Kurt Lewin. That would be too obvious a Jewish name. So, he was given the name Roman Paul Mytka...”

“He has to re-establish himself as Kurt Lewin. So, this document actually states that, ‘This man, Roman Matkowski or Roman Mytka, born on February 28, 1925 is also Kurt Lewin, son of doctor Jecheskel Lewin, born on the same day.’ It says that he took this false identity during the war in order to save his own life.”

Why does Dr. Erbelding say it is very rare to find a collection of papers like that of Kurt Lewin? What does this reveal about the nature of life in hiding?

### **Risk and Resistance: The Elise Kann Jaeger Collection**

When Germany occupied the Netherlands, Elise Kann's mother placed her and her sister in hiding with Molly Van Heel, a non-Jewish friend of hers, and Molly's husband, Jerry. Elise was

aware that the Van Heels worked closely with the Resistance; though it wasn't until decades later that Elise learned the full story behind the Van Heels' efforts to rescue countless Jews.

Key quotes:

“In other countries you have experiences where people would purchase baptismal papers or birth certificates from non-Jews and just walk into an office and have cards issued to them using that piece of paper. This is different because they were actually making identification cards in their house, which is highly unusual because you needed the stamps. You needed a variety of devices to make it work. And they stole these things. They managed to steal these. Or they worked with the underground who obtained them for that...”

“They also had a book which was printed by the Nazis in the Netherlands, which really was interesting, because it's a number by number description of every identification card that is thought to be stolen or forged. And this enabled them to also know what numbers were problematic.”

What does Suzy Snyder assert was the moment that things “came to a head” for the Van Heels causing them to decide that they wanted to work more closely with the Resistance and help rescue people in hiding?

What makes the false identification cards in this collection so unusual?