

Educator's Guide

★ GREAT JEWISH LIVES ★

RABBI DR. SOLOMON SCHONFELD

Hero of the Kindertransport



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FOR THE TEACHER

This guide consists of lessons to assist you in using *Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld: Hero of the Kindertransport* in your classroom. The guide is written in a chapter-by-chapter format and includes a synopsis, pre-reading activities, and comprehension questions, as well as supplementary activities to be used at the end of the book.

The book and its accompanying guide can be used in a number of ways. Students reading at the same level might participate in a small-group guided reading of the book, returning to it over several weeks as they read and discuss it with the teacher. The entire class might read the book and discuss it in small groups using literature circles or reciprocal teaching. The teacher can then use the suggested questions to guide students in their discussions. Comprehension questions can be answered orally or in writing. Students should be encouraged to support their answers with evidence from the text. Students might keep a notebook of their responses throughout the year, which can then be used for progress monitoring and assessment purposes.

This teacher's guide includes many document-based questions. These questions focus on utilizing critical-thinking skills. Students are also asked to make comparisons, draw analogies, and apply historic analysis using primary and secondary sources from this time period. Source material for questions include photographs and documents. The questions can be used to teach students how to analyze source documents and deepen their understanding of the life and times of the person featured in this biography.

Using this guide can help you as a teacher create more active readers. Students who are encouraged to think about their reading, make inferences, compare and contrast events and characters, and notice author's language will read more closely and carefully. They will become more thoughtful readers, and their reading comprehension will improve. Working on this in the context of authentic literature helps to inspire a motivation and love for reading.

SYNOPSIS Before and after World War II, Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld rescued hundreds of Jewish children with the Kindertransport. He brought them to England and cared for all their needs.

Pre-Reading Activities

Use one or more of the following activities to introduce the book.

1. **Predictions:** Preview the book by reading the title, the author, and looking at the illustration on the cover. What do you think this book will be about? Have you read any other books in this series? What clues can you gather about the book from the phrase “Hero of the Kindertransport”?
2. **Building Background:** Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld lived in England during World War II. Give students background information on the war, including some basic geography of the European continent.
3. **Genre Focus:** *Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld: Hero of the Kindertransport* is a biography. This means that it tells the true story of a person’s life. As you read this book, complete the graphic organizer at the end of this packet to describe Rabbi Schonfeld’s character traits, life, and accomplishments.
4. **Vocabulary Focus:** Discuss the word “*kindertransport*.” What two words do you see in that word? What might be its meaning?



INTRODUCTION


1. What are some questions you now have about Rabbi Schonfeld? Note these questions and leave space to record their answers as you read the rest of the book.
2. Look closely at the photograph of Rabbi Schonfeld on page X. Based on this photo and information given in the introduction, what predictions might you make about his personality?

CHAPTER 1: A DREAM

SYNOPSIS Rabbi Victor Schonfeld sees the problems facing England's youth and begins a Jewish school in London, the Jewish Secondary School (JSS).

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out about Rabbi Schonfeld's father, Rabbi Victor Schonfeld, and his dream for England's Jewish community.

Guided Questions


1. Sometimes the Jews in Britain tried to be "even more British than the British." What does this mean?
2. In what way did Rabbi Schonfeld hope to change the schooling of Jewish children in England?
3. Explain why the Jews of England made fun of Rabbi Schonfeld's dream of a Jewish school.
4.  **Document-based question:** Refer to the newspaper article at the bottom of page 5. What additional details can you gather about Rabbi Schonfeld or the starting of the JSS from this newspaper clipping?

CHAPTER 2: A SCHOOL WITHOUT A PRINCIPAL

SYNOPSIS Rabbi Victor Schonfeld dies, and his seventeen-year-old son Solomon (Solly) is selected to fill his role as principal. Solly goes to learn in Nitra and then Slabodka, and the community in London awaits his return.

➔ **Prompt:** Read to find out about Rabbi Schonfeld's death and how his school continues on.

Guided Questions


1. Describe how Rabbi Schonfeld's new school was both similar to and different from the secular schools in England.
2. Bring details from the text to support the idea that the people of London respected Rabbi Victor Schonfeld even if they didn't always agree with his ideas.
3. How did Mr. Kestenbaum's opinion of Solly change after his interview? Why did it change?
4. Why did Solly Schonfeld leave England to study in the yeshivos of Nitra and then Slabodka?
5.  **Creative writing:** Write a letter from Mr. Kestenbaum to the other presidents of the Adass Shul in which you explain the choice of Solomon Schonfeld as the next rabbi of the shul.

CHAPTER 3: RETURN TO LONDON

SYNOPSIS Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld returns to London and revitalizes the JSS school, instituting changes that make it on par with the London secular schools of the time.

➔ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld returns to London and takes over his father's school. Note how he helps the school grow and develop.

Guided Questions


1. Describe how the people of the Adass Shul may have felt when Dr. Solomon Schonfeld returned to their shul for the first time after his time away.
2. How did Dr. Schonfeld make sure the JSS could compete with the secular schools in London?
3. Describe the first JSS school dinner, and explain why Dr. Schonfeld chose to make it so fancy.
4. What made Dr. Grunfeld the perfect teacher for Dr. Schonfeld's new school? Bring ideas and details from the text.
5.  **Creative writing:** Write a telegram from Dr. Grunfeld to her parents in which she explains that she will be moving to London. Be sure to include why she's doing this. Remember to be brief!

CHAPTER 4: A DANGEROUS TIME

SYNOPSIS Meanwhile, conditions in Germany are becoming more and more difficult. Jews want to leave Germany for any country that will allow them in. English Jewry promises to raise money to support incoming refugees.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out what is going on in Germany at this time and how this affects British Jewry.

Guided Questions


1. Describe some of the ways life in Germany became more difficult after Hitler came to power.
2. Describe why it was so hard for German Jews to leave their country even if they wanted to.
3. Why did the British minister say that he could not allow Jewish refugees into England? How did the Jewish representatives respond?
4. What can you learn about the British Jewish community from their response to the British minister?
5.  **Document-based question:** Describe Berlin of 1933 based on the photograph on page 25.

CHAPTER 5: ANSCHLUSS

SYNOPSIS After the German Anschluss, Austria becomes a very dangerous place for Jews. Dr. Schonfeld begins to rescue Austrian children and bring them to England.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Dr. Schonfeld begins to rescue Austrian children.

Guided Questions

1. Explain the title of this chapter. What was the *Anschluss*?
2. Why was nighttime so scary for children in Germany or Austria?
3. What did Rabbi Weissmandl demand from Dr. Schonfeld in London?
4. Explain why the British Foreign Office warned Dr. Schonfeld not to go to Austria. Why didn't he listen to them?
5.  **Creative writing:** Write an announcement created by Dr. Schonfeld to be placed in London newspapers asking families to take in Jewish refugee children.



CHAPTER 6: STRETCHING OUT HIS HAND

SYNOPSIS Together with Chief Rabbi Hertz, Dr. Schonfeld rescues hundreds of European rabbis. After Kristallnacht, trains of European children begin arriving in England on Kindertransports.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Dr. Schonfeld rescues hundreds of European Jews.

Guided Questions




1. Explain how Rabbi Hertz and Dr. Schonfeld worked together to save German and Austrian Jews. Why did each rabbi need the other one's help?
2. How did Dr. Schonfeld convince the British government to grant visas to the hundreds of rabbis?
3. Describe what happened in Germany on the night of November 9, 1938.
4. Based on information until this point, what can you tell about Dr. Schonfeld's personality? Bring evidence from the text to support your opinions.
5. **Document-based question:** Refer to the photograph of Rabbi Joseph Hertz on page 39. What details do you notice in the picture?

CHAPTER 7: A TRAIN TO LIFE

SYNOPSIS Many children flee Germany on the Kindertransport trains.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out about a child's experiences on the Kindertransport.

Guided Questions



1. What were some of the items children typically brought with them on the Kindertransport? Explain why they brought each of these items.
2. Describe some of the feelings of the children on the Kindertransport.
3. How might the Kindertransport have affected Dr. Schonfeld back in London? Why was he referred to as the "hero of the Kindertransport"?
4.  **Focus on geography:** Study a map of Europe and trace the route of the Kindertransport from Germany to England.
5.  **Creative writing:** Refer to the quotes from parents on pages 44–45. Choose one of these statements and explain why you think a parent would select them as his last words before his child left on the Kindertransport.
6.  **Document-based question:** Refer to the photographs on pages 43 and 44. Describe the children of the Kindertransport.

CHAPTER 8: KINDER IN LONDON

SYNOPSIS Dr. Schonfeld welcomes hundreds of Jewish children to London and cares for all of their needs.

➔ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Dr. Schonfeld takes care of the children of the Kindertransport.

Guided Questions

1. Describe some of the feelings of the Kindertransport children when they arrived in London for the first time.
2. When Dr. Schonfeld took in these hundreds of children, his job as school principal was changing. In what ways did it change, and in what ways did it remain the same?
3. What were some ways Dr. Schonfeld showed his concern for each individual child in his care?
-  4. **Document-based question:** Refer to the photograph at the top of page 49 of Dr. Schonfeld welcoming children. What details do you notice in the picture?
-  5. **Document-based question:** Study the photograph of Kindertransport children on page 50. What details do you notice in the picture?

CHAPTER 9: CHILDREN ALONE

SYNOPSIS Dr. Schonfeld cares for all of the needs of “his” children — physical, spiritual, and emotional.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out more about how Dr. Schonfeld cares for the children of the Kindertransport.

Guided Questions


1. How were Dr. Schonfeld and the CRREC different from other groups who worked to save Jewish children?
2. In what ways did Dr. Schonfeld work to make sure each child grew up to follow the ways of the Torah?
3. To the children of the Kindertransport, “London seemed like a different world.” Describe how life in London may have been different from what they were used to back home.
4. How did Dr. Schonfeld go out of his way to show care for each child?
5. How did opening Ohr Yisroel continue Dr. Schonfeld’s mission of saving Jewish children?

CHAPTER 10: OFF TO SHEFFORD

SYNOPSIS The JSS school evacuates to the English countryside to escape possible bombing of London. There, Dr. Schonfeld continues to care for “his” children.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how the children of the Kindertransport are forced to move again, and how Dr. Schonfeld continues to care for them.

Guided Questions


1. Explain why the JSS school left London for the countryside.
2. Describe some of the feelings the Jewish children may have felt when they got off the train in the English countryside.
3. How did Dr. Schonfeld help the children settle in to life in Shefford?
4. How did Dr. Schonfeld make sure the children could keep Jewish law even in Shefford?
5. England declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939. How might this declaration have affected the children of Shefford?
-  6. **Creative writing:** Write a diary as though you’re one of the children of Shefford. Include one entry for the day you arrive, and one entry written after the first Shabbos there.

CHAPTER 11: A WORLD AT WAR

SYNOPSIS Throughout the war, Dr. Schonfeld continues to care for “his” children. He marries and raises a family of his own.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Dr. Schonfeld continues his rescue work throughout the war.

Guided Questions


1. What were some of the ways Dr. Schonfeld helped the European refugees after they arrived in England?
2. Why did Dr. Schonfeld and his wife have a small wedding even though their families were both well-known and popular?
3. Dr. Schonfeld stayed in London during the week even when his family was in the countryside. Why?
4. Explain Dr. Schonfeld’s message to the children when he said that all red lights will turn green. What lesson was he trying to teach them?
5.  **Creative writing:** Write a thank-you letter as one of the children of Shefford to Dr. Schonfeld, thanking him for his weekly Friday visits. Be sure to include how these visits make you feel and why they are important.

CHAPTER 12: ENEMY ALIENS!

SYNOPSIS When German refugees are arrested by British police for being enemy aliens, Dr. Schonfeld once again comes to their aid.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Dr. Schonfeld helps German refugees in England.

Guided Questions


1. Explain why Mr. Landau and thousands of other German refugees were arrested by the British police.
2. How did Dr. Schonfeld help the German Jews who were imprisoned by the British?
-  3. **Document-based question:** Refer to the photograph of the template stamp on page 80. What is included on the stamp to help identify for whom the packages are intended? What details do you notice on the stamp?

CHAPTER 13: RESCUE DURING THE WAR

SYNOPSIS Throughout the war years, Dr. Schonfeld and the CRREC are involved in helping the refugees in many different ways.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Dr. Schonfeld helps many besides for “his” children.

Guided Questions


1. Describe some of the ways Dr. Schonfeld helped Jews escape from Europe.
2. Describe some of the ways Dr. Schonfeld helped Jewish refugee children throughout England.
3. How did Dr. Schonfeld help the Jewish soldiers in the British army?
-  4. **Document-based question:** Refer to the photograph on page 86. What details do you notice in the picture?

CHAPTER 14: AFTER THE WAR

SYNOPSIS After the war, Dr. Schonfeld organizes synagogue ambulances to distribute kosher food and Jewish items to survivors.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Dr. Schonfeld continues to help Jews after the war is over.

Guided Questions

1. What were some of the items delivered by Dr. Schonfeld and the other rabbis using the synagogue ambulances? Explain why each of these items was important.
2. Why did the remaining Jews prefer to leave their hometowns for Israel, America, Canada, or Britain?
-  3. **Document-based question:** Refer to the photograph on page 90. What details do you notice in the picture?

CHAPTER 15: THE HIDDEN CHILDREN

SYNOPSIS After the war, Dr. Schonfeld rescues many orphan children from war-torn Europe and brings them to safety in England.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Dr. Schonfeld continues to rescue Jewish children after the war is over.

Guided Questions

1. Why did Dr. Schonfeld travel throughout Poland in the uniform of a British officer?
2. How did Dr. Schonfeld manage to find the Jewish children even when the nuns claimed there were no Jews hidden with them?
3. What two messages did Dr. Schonfeld give the Jewish orphans he rescued? Why do you think he chose those two messages?
4. How did Dr. Schonfeld manage to bring in one hundred and fifty children with only sixty visas?
5. Compare the children whom Dr. Schonfeld rescued after the war to the ones he brought on the Kindertransport. In what ways were their experiences similar? In what ways were they different?

CHAPTER 16: BUILDING UP

SYNOPSIS Dr. Schonfeld builds up the JSS network into five successful schools. He passes away on February 6, 1984, at the age of seventy-two.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out about the continuation of Dr. Schonfeld’s work and his life after the war.

Guided Questions

1. How do you think the children of the Kindertransport managed to grow into great leaders when they were left alone in a strange country?
2. Compare and contrast the Hasmonean schools of today with the original JSS started by Rabbi Victor Schonfeld.
3. Look back at the quote from Dr. Schonfeld — “I think more often of the children I have not been able to save.” What does this demonstrate about Dr. Schonfeld? What kind of person was he?

SUPPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

Use one or more of the following activities to conclude the book.

Creative Writing

- **Newspaper:** Design the front page of a Shefford newspaper published on Friday, September 1, 1939.
- **Instructions:** Write a set of instructions for the children of the Kindertransport. Include what they should bring with them and what they can expect when they arrive in London.

Quotable Quotes

There are many quotes throughout the book. Choose two of the following, and for each one discuss how the quote shows us something important about the person who said it. Be sure to also explain what the quote means.

- *"We do not just want life; we want a purpose in life."* (Rabbi Victor Schonfeld)
- *"Be good children. Make us proud."* (Parents of the Kindertransport)
- *"Jetzt zent ihr meine kinderlach (Now you are my children)."* (Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld)
- *"There are a lot of red traffic lights in life. But don't worry, boys and girls, every red light turns green."* (Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld)

Focus on Character

Review the note at the back of the book from Dr. Schonfeld's son. What additional information does this give you about Dr. Schonfeld's personality?

Who Was Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld?

★ FACTS ★

Year of Birth: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Parents' Names: _____

Year of Death: _____



Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld

His major accomplishments were:



Some of his outstanding character traits were:



Biography Sketch

Physical Description

Actions

Name

His Thoughts and Feelings

What Others Say and Think about Him
