



Grades 6 – 8; Ages 9 – 12

Shanghai Escape

Written by Kathy Kacer

Guide written by Larry Swartz

Teacher's Guide

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About the Book

When Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party made life unbearable for Jewish people in Europe, many desperately sought refuge. Lily Toufar and her mother and father were one family that travelled to Shanghai, China to escape the horrors of war. Unfortunately, all was not safe for the more than twenty thousand Jewish refugees who moved to Shanghai. The area was controlled by Japan, whose leaders supported Hitler. The local government ordered Jewish refugees to move into a poor area known as Hongkew, where conditions were unbearable. Living spaces were crowded, food was scarce, and freedom was limited. For the Jewish people, it seemed that they were in as much danger in China as they were in Europe. Kathy Kacer tells Lily's story from leaving her home in Vienna in 1938 to liberation in 1945, a life filled with danger, hanging on to hope. *Shanghai Escape* is A Holocaust Remembrance Book for Young Readers from Second Story Press.

About the Author

Kathy Kacer is an award-winning author who has written more than twenty books that focus on stories of the Holocaust. Her work includes picture books, historical fiction, and nonfiction writing. As a child of Holocaust survivors, Kathy Kacer is a passionate advocate of Holocaust stories and has claimed that she feels personally responsible for collecting stories and passing them on to the next generation. In the book *Teaching Tough Topics* by Larry Swartz, Kathy Kacer writes: "I think that the lessons we can learn—lessons about hatred and power, but also lessons about compassion, strength, and selflessness—are lessons for the ages. Remember this: Every time you remember the history, and every time you talk about it, you are honouring someone who lived and possibly perished during that time. You are giving meaning to their lives. And that is a remarkable thing" (2020, p. 69).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Shanghai, China

- Although many people in the world sympathized with the Jewish families trying to escape persecution in Europe, most countries (including the U.S., Canada, and Australia) did not provide the safe refuge that Shanghai offered.
- More than twenty thousand Jewish refugees (mostly from Austria and Germany) came to Shanghai between 1937 and 1939.
- Upon their arrival to Shanghai, Jewish citizens enjoyed relative freedom and lived side-by-side with their Chinese neighbours.
- The Japanese Imperial Army occupied Shanghai by 1937 and imposed harsh conditions on the Chinese people. Japan was an ally of Nazi Germany.
- After the attack on Pearl Harbour, the Japanese government in Shanghai ordered Jewish refugees to move into a ghetto. The poor Chinese citizens and Jewish refugees lived under terrible conditions in an area known as Hongkew.

LEARNING GOALS

Students will have the opportunity to:

- Gain information about the threat of the Nazis.
- Learn about the restrictions, dangers, and harsh living conditions the Jewish refugees encountered in China.
- Read and respond to the true stories about one Jewish girl's experiences from 1938 to 1945 as a Jewish refugee.
- Gain information about Japan's role in World War II and the control the Japanese had in Shanghai.

- Learn about the history of World War II and the Holocaust.
- Gain an understanding of the threat and destruction of atomic bombs.
- Reflect on the emotional connections we make when reading a text.
- Share their responses to the text through reading, writing, discussion, and the arts.

VOCABULARY

Kristallnacht: (p. 20) “The Night of Broken Glass” was a demonstration in Germany and Austria against Jews carried out by the Nazi Party (November 9–10, 1938)

missionary: (p. 38) a person sent on a religious mission, especially to promote Christianity in a foreign country

heims: (p. 39) a series of barrack-like buildings constructed to house Jewish refugees in Shanghai

relocate: (p. 61) to move to a new place and establish a home or business there

rickshaw: (p. 63) a two-wheeled vehicle drawn by one or more people, mostly found in Asian countries

stateless refugee: (p. 73) a person who is not considered a citizen by any state

ghetto: (p. 80) a poor urban area occupied primarily by a minority group or groups

checkpoint: (p. 97) a barrier or entrance, usually at a border where travellers are subject to security checks

blockade: (p. 98) an act of sealing off a place to prevent goods or people from entering

coolie: (p. 99) an unskilled native labourer, mostly in Asian countries

dysentery: (p. 150) severe illness caused by contaminated food or water resulting in a swelling stomach, severe cramps, and diarrhea

Seder: (p. 159) the dinner ceremony marking the beginning of the Jewish festival of Passover

ravenous: (p. 162) extremely hungry

proclamation: (p. 164) an official announcement dealing with a matter of great importance

bomb shelter: (p. 201) an enclosed space or structure designed to protect people from explosive weapons

provisions: (p. 208) supply of food, drink, or equipment

atomic bomb: (p. 225) a bomb that causes destruction from the rapid release of nuclear energy through heat, blast, and radioactivity

INTRODUCING *SHANGHAI ESCAPE*

ACTIVATING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:
Sharing Information about the Holocaust

Use a Trauma-Informed Approach

- a. Know your students.
- b. Inform them that parts of the story include antisemitism and intimidation by soldiers.
- c. Share a process for students to take a break when they need one.
- d. Inform parents that your class will be reading a story and learning about the Holocaust, so families can support students at home as needed. Share the book summary with them.
- e. Check in with students along the way.
- f. Avoid compare/contrast questions.
- g. Avoid role play or writing in the voice of a Holocaust survivor or a soldier.
- h. Avoid displaying or sharing symbols of hate or horrific imagery.
- i. Do your research. For example, the Montreal Holocaust Museum (<https://museeholocauste.ca/en/resources-training/teaching-holocaust-middle-high-school/>) provides some tips and resources for teachers.

Part A:

As a class, discuss the following:

- What facts do you know about the Holocaust?
- Why did Adolf Hitler introduce laws to limit the freedom of Jewish people? Why did he want to rid the world of Europe's Jews?
- What stories or movies have you read about those who have survived the Holocaust?

Part B:

In the Introduction to *Shanghai Escape*, Kathy Kacer provides an overview of Shanghai as a destination for European Jews trying to escape Hitler's cruel laws.

1. Why did Jewish people flee to Shanghai in the late 1930s?
2. How did war with Japan change the life of Jewish refugees who had settled in Shanghai?
3. What was the Hongkew ghetto?

RESEARCH: ON THE MAP

1. Display a world map of Europe and point out the locations of Austria and China. Where in China is the city of Shanghai?
2. The map on page 111 of *Shanghai Escape* shows the long route that Lily's family took to settle in Shanghai. What are some countries that they travelled through?
3. Ask students to mark the cities and countries on the map that they have read or heard about in other Holocaust stories.

MAKING CONNECTIONS: ON THE MOVE

With the rise of Nazi power, European Jews were forced from their homes. Many were forced to live in ghettos before being transported to concentration camps. Some families chose to leave Europe, hoping to find refuge. As a class, in small groups or individually in a journal, students can share their experiences of moving by answering the following:

1. How many times has your family moved?
2. What are some reasons why a family would move from one place to another?
3. Whose family has immigrated to Canada?
4. When forced to leave their home in Austria, Lily and other Jewish families were forced to restrict the number of items they could take with them. What three essential items would you take with you if forced to limit things you could pack?

Note: Use a trauma-informed approach when doing this activity. Some students may have lived-experiences with immigration or with being a refugee or may have family members who were displaced from their homes. Remind students that they do not need to share their personal experiences if they do not wish to and share a process for students to take a break if they need to.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1941

1. Why are Lily and her family in danger even though they escaped Europe?
2. Lily notices a beetle on the floor of the apartment and finds herself rooting for it to make it across the room without being stepped on. “*It isn’t hurting anyone, Lily thought. Why should we hurt it?*” (p. 18). How is the beetle’s situation similar to Lily and her family’s situation?
3. Describe the relationship between Lily and her Uncle Willi.
4. How were the Chinese people treated by the Japanese soldiers in Shanghai?
5. Why do the Japanese soldiers parade in the streets following the attack on Pearl Harbour? What does Lily notice while watching the parade?
6. Mother Lawler was an American missionary in Shanghai who helped Lily and her family settle when they arrived. What is the work of a missionary? Why does Lily feel uncomfortable around Mother Lawler and the missionaries despite their kindness?
7. “Lily didn’t know what to say. She didn’t know how to explain to her friend that not understanding the whole truth was worse for her than hearing it” (p. 43). Do you agree with Lily? Why is it so important to understand the truth? How will it change the way Lily feels?

1942

8. The Japanese army mistreated and often imprisoned Chinese citizens without cause. Why did they treat them this way?
9. Describe Lily’s relationship with Oma. Does her relationship remind you of your relationship with a family member or senior citizen?

10. Why are Lily's parents worried about friends left behind in Vienna?
11. Describe the differences between Frenchtown (where Lily lived) and Hongkew. What does Lily learn in her first trip to Hongkew with her Pop?
12. "As long as the family is together, everything will be okay" (p. 77). Pop says this many times in the story when their lives are disrupted and in danger. Why is this statement so important to the family? Do you agree with Pop's optimism?

1943

13. At the age of ten, Lily is now included in the adult conversations about the next move, the situation with the Nazis in Shanghai, and their future. Why was it important for Lily to hear these conversations? As a ten-year-old, do you think she should be part of family discussions?
14. What is the purpose of the barbed wire around the ghetto? How does this barbed wire make Lily feel?
15. The designated area for the fifteen thousand Jewish people in Hongkew was approximately one square mile. Look at a map to see the distance of one square mile or find out what is a mile from your house and imagine fifteen thousand people living in that space.
16. Despite the challenges of moving to the ghetto, what worries Lily about going to a new school?
17. Lily shares her journey to Shanghai with her new classmates. Do you or someone you know have a story about immigration? Are there stories in today's world that are similar to Lily's?
18. What lesson does Lily learn on the first school day in the ghetto?
19. Describe some of the terrible conditions and challenges about living in Hongkew.
20. In Chapter 17, Lily's family is hoping to enjoy a good meal of meat, but when a cat comes along, things don't go well for the family. Use your

imagination and, from the perspective of a member of Lily's family or from the perspective of the cat, tell the story of the cat theft to a partner. Will the story change if you are retelling it from the mother's point of view or the cat's?

1944

21. Despite the challenges of the ghetto, the Jewish people were able to continue some practices from Vienna and their past. Describe some of these rituals.
22. How is Lily affected by the news of the concentration camps and deaths of Jewish people in Europe?
23. Describe the incident with the Japanese soldier, Lily, and her mother. What might you say to Lily to help her recover from the incident?

1945

24. Why is it so important that Lily does not develop an infection after her fall?
25. After the war ended in Europe, Pop tells Lily that when the Japanese armies surrender, they will be free. "What would it mean to be free, she wondered" (p. 191). Make a list of some of the things Lily would be able to do or feel if she were free. Students can share their lists in small groups.
26. Why is the war in Japan continuing after the war in Europe ended?
27. What is the purpose of the Pao Chia patrolling unit that Willi is forced to join? What is your opinion of the Pao Chia? Could it be helpful in the ghetto? Why or why not?
28. How does the family manage to survive the bombing? How does the bombing bring the Chinese families and Jewish families together? Why does it seem strange to Lily that it was the Americans who were bombing Shanghai?

29. How does Willi almost die? How does Lily help to save him?
30. How does the war finally end? Why was Lily concerned that it ended with this massive bomb?

Afterword

31. The afterword shares Lily and her family's stories after their liberation. Why did Lily's family leave Shanghai?
32. How is the story of the Jewish refugees documented in Hongkew?
33. Why do you think Lily went back to Shanghai as an adult? How do you think she felt visiting what was left of the ghetto?
34. Why did the refugees refer to Shanghai as their "Noah's Ark" (p. 242)?
35. Why is *Shanghai Escape* an important book to read to understand the history of World War II and the plight of the Jewish people during the war?

SUGGESTED RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY: Creating Lily's Timeline (*Writing and Illustrating*)

Shanghai Escape recounts Lily Toufar's experiences from 1938, when she and her family departed Vienna to settle in Shanghai, and continues until the liberation of the ghetto in 1945. She and her family, along with other Jewish refugees, experienced harsh conditions as they were forced into a ghetto. The threat of war and Japanese control smothered the Jewish who were hoping to seek a place of safety. In the book, many chapters list the year of the historical events outlined in the chapters.

For this activity, have students create a timeline that highlights significant events in Lily Toufar's life as a Jewish refugee. Students should consider at least six to eight important dates to mark on their timeline. For each date, students should write a short synopsis explaining why each date is significant. As an extension, encourage students to create a visual timeline by creating a sketch to illustrate significant moments.

ACTIVITY: Exploring Voice: Transforming Biography to Autobiography (*Writing in the First Person*)

Shanghai Escape is an example of historical fiction where the author reports significant information and tells stories about what is happening. The book is written in the third person using the pronouns she, he, and they. The narratives in the book are based on true events and are drawn from primary and secondary research. In a sense, *Shanghai Escape* is a biography of the life Lily Toufar lived during the war years.

Have the students imagine that this book was written as an autobiography and consider whether Lily would tell the story from her point of view using the I/my pronouns to recount events. To practise writing in the first person, students can choose a short passage from any chapter and transform the text from the third person to first person perspective. Students can choose any narrative from Lily's life that they found to be interesting, sad, or harrowing. Students might recount the one of the following events in the story:

- Eating dumplings bought from a vendor (p. 28–29)
- Lily dyes her hair (p. 53)
- Lily goes to the opera (p. 72)
- Lily worries about having to move to the ghetto (p. 79)
- Lily’s first day at the Kadoorie School (p. 108–109)
- Mr. Tobias tries to punish Lily with a ruler (p. 130–131)
- Lily is forced to eat cod-liver oil (p. 140)
- A cat steals meat from the family’s dinner (p. 152–153)
- Lily attends synagogue on the first night of Passover (p. 159)
- Lily’s mother is stopped by a Japanese soldier and Lily abandons her mother (p. 172–173)

NOTE: Students can focus on one or two paragraphs for this activity and can use the author’s words or make small changes to the storytelling as if it might have been written by Lily.

The following passage serves as an example of transforming a third person narrative to a first person narrative:

Original:

“Lily wasn’t sure anyone could stand up to the Japanese police who guarded the ghetto. She would never convince Harry of that, though. A small mouse ran out from underneath the haystack and staggered across Lily’s shoe” (p. 133).

First person narrative:

I wasn’t sure anyone could stand up to the Japanese police who guarded the ghetto. I don’t think I could ever convince my friend Harry of that, though. Suddenly, I saw a small mouse run out from underneath the haystack and stagger across my shoe. Ugh!

RESPONSE ACTIVITY: Lily's Living Photo Album, 1938–1945

(Drama: Creating Tableau)

A tableau is a living picture or representation of a dramatic moment or scene created by a group posing silently without moving. Invite the students to work in groups of five and list five important moments or events in Lily's life from 1938 to 1945. Once they have decided on the moments, ask the students to create tableau frozen images depicting these moments or events to create a living photo album of Lily's journey through the war. Groups can rehearse and then present their tableau to another group or to the class and compare their choices of events.

When creating the tableau, ask students to:

- Be mindful of positioning themselves so everyone in the picture can be seen.
- Consider and create a focus for the picture.
- Remain frozen for a few seconds before moving to the next picture.
- Try to make the transitions from picture to picture smooth and in silence.
- Select music to play during the tableau to enhance the mood and aid in transitions.

Extension Activity: Reflecting on Tableau

Following the tableau presentations, discuss the following with students:

- How did creating and presenting the tableau help you to better understand Lily and her family?
- What images stood out in the presentation and why?
- What images made you feel sad, happy, or scared for Lily?
- What did you learn about yourself through creating and presenting Lily's photo album?

ACTIVITY: Describing Important Places in the Story (Recording Important Details)

Throughout *Shanghai Escape*, we learn of some places that played an important part in the Jewish refugee story. Present the following list to the students and have them write a brief description in two or three sentences that provides information about each place. Students can work in pairs and choose at least six items from this list. Once completed, students can meet in groups to share information.

NOTE: Some places appear more than once throughout *Shanghai Escape*. Students will gain information about the significance of each place by reading about different events.

- Vienna, Austria (p. 30)
- Pearl Harbour (p. 13)
- Frenchtown (p. 29)
- the Missionary Home (p. 39)
- Hongkew (p. 62; Chapters 8–10)
- Café de Paris (p. 91)
- SACRA School building (p. 104)
- Kadoorie School (p. 108; p. 211)
- Stateless Refugees Affairs Bureau (p. 119–124)
- the Paris Shoe House (p. 117)
- the Garden Bridge (p. 101; p. 120)
- market stalls on Yuhang Road (p. 141)
- the Ohel Moshe Synagogue (p. 159; p. 242)
- Majdanek (p. 166)

ACTIVITY: Research (*Sharing Opinions*)

The Americans chose to use atomic bombs to end the war. One fell on Hiroshima and one on Nagasaki. Pop said that these bombs would wipe out everything in their path. “That means not only buildings and military bases, but people; men, women and children who would be helpless against the force of this weapon” (p. 227). Lily asked her parents, “But was it worth the massive destruction that this kind of bomb could produce?...no one could really answer her.”

Have students work in pairs to research the atomic bombs used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Consider:

- How many people died?
- What were the lingering and aftereffects of the bomb?
- Do other countries have this bomb?
- Read Truman’s reasons for using the bomb (p. 227)

Extension Activity:

- i. Partners can collaborate to write an opinion that answers Lily’s question: “Was it worth the mass destruction” (p. 227) to end the war? Students might choose to write their opinions as a list.
- ii. Once completed, as a whole class, students can debate the issue of having nuclear bombs to end a war.

ACTIVITY: Preparing a Podcast to Discuss History (*Media*)

A podcast is another way that students could retell Lily and her family’s story and the story of the Jewish refugees of Shanghai who journeyed from Europe to survive the Holocaust. Working in small groups, students can create a series of podcast episodes telling the story of how the community survived life in a ghetto under Japanese rule during seven years of continuing restrictions.

Students can consider the following to include as episodes in the podcast:

- a summary of Lily’s life and the lives of Jewish people and families in Europe before the war
- life upon arrival in the French Concession
- relocating to the ghetto
- the bombing of the ghetto
- liberation
- quotations from key characters in the story (e.g., Susie, the family, Willi, Lily’s parents, friends, and teachers) describing what it was like to live, work, or teach in the ghetto
- your opinion on why it is important to tell these stories today

Extension Activity:

Students can put the episodes together and share their podcasts with other groups or outside classes.

ACTIVITY: Creating Artifacts for a Museum of Remembrance (*Media*)

In the afterword, we learn that a monument was placed in Shanghai to honour the Jewish refugees who lived in Shanghai during World War II. The Ohel Moshe Synagogue was restored and is now the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, which contains artifacts and documents that tell the story of the Jewish refugees who travelled to Shanghai during the war seeking safe haven.

Ask the students to imagine that a museum was created after the war to honour Lily Toufar and the thousands of Jewish citizens who lived in Shanghai. Students can create an artifact that might be found in the museum. This might include a letter, poster, photograph (or illustration that represents a photograph), drawing, map, newspaper headline, household object, quotation, plaque, etc. Students can review the images presented in *Shanghai Escape* to brainstorm some items that might appear in the museum.

Extension Activity:

A display can be set up in the classroom. Each student, in turn, can present their memorial artifact by explaining its significance.

Further Reading

Picture Books

Bat Zvi, Pnina and Margie Wolfe; illus. Isabelle Cardinal, *The Promise*

Nonfiction, \$18.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-058-2

Kacer, Kathy; illus. Gillian Newland, *The Magician of Auschwitz*

Nonfiction, \$18.95, ISBN: 978-1-927583-46-3

Kacer, Kathy; illus. Juliana Kolesova, *The Brave Princess and Me*

Fiction, \$18.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-102-2

Renaud, Anne; illus. Richard Rudnicki, *Fania's Heart*

Nonfiction, \$18.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-057-5

Upjohn, Rebecca; illus. Renné Benoit, *The Secret of the Village Fool*

Nonfiction, \$18.95, ISBN: 978-1-926920-75-7

Middle Grade

Anne Frank House; illus. Huck Scarry, *All About Anne*

Nonfiction, \$24.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-060-5

Arato, Rona, *The Ship to Nowhere: On Board the Exodus*

Nonfiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-772600-18-6

Clark, Kathy, *The Choice*

Fiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-927583-65-4

Clark, Kathy, *Guardian Angel House*

Fiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-897187-58-6

Dublin, Anne, *She's A Mensch! Ten Amazing Jewish Women*

Nonfiction, \$22.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-320-0

Jimenez, Sameea and Corinne Promislow with Larry Swartz, *What Does Hate Look Like?*

Nonfiction, \$21.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-290-6

Kacer, Kathy, *Clara's War*

Fiction, \$8.95, ISBN: 978-1-896764-42-9

Kacer, Kathy, *The Diary of Laura's Twin*

Fiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-897187-39-5

Kacer, Kathy, *Hidden on the High Wire*

Fiction, \$13.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-251-7

Kacer, Kathy, *Hiding Edith: A True Story*

Nonfiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-897187-06-7

Kacer, Kathy, *The Night Spies*

Fiction, \$8.95, ISBN: 978-1-89676-470-2

Kacer, Kathy, *The Secret of Gabi's Dresser*

Fiction, \$10.95, ISBN: 978-1-896764-15-3

Kacer, Kathy, *To Hope and Back: The Journey of the St. Louis*

Nonfiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-897187-96-8

Kacer, Kathy, *The Underground Reporters*

Nonfiction, \$17.95, ISBN: 978-1-896764-85-6

Kacer, Kathy, *We Are Their Voice: Young People Respond to the Holocaust*

Nonfiction, \$16.95, ISBN: 978-1-926920-77-1

Levine, Karen, *Hana's Suitcase*

Nonfiction, \$18.95, ISBN: 978-1-896764-55-9

Levine, Karen, *Hana's Suitcase Anniversary Album* (10th anniversary special edition)

Nonfiction, \$24.95, ISBN: 978-1-92692-036-8

Levine, Karen and Emil Sher, *Hana's Suitcase on Stage*
Nonfiction / Drama, \$18.95, ISBN: 978-1-89718-705-0

Spring, Debbie, *The Righteous Smuggler*
Fiction, \$9.95, ISBN: 978-1-896764-97-9

Wees, Janet, *When We Were Shadows*
Nonfiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-061-2

YA/Adult

Burakowski, Ella, *Hidden Gold: A True Story of the Holocaust*
YA Nonfiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-927583-74-6

Gold, Jennifer, *Names in a Jar*
YA Fiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-207-4

Kacer, Kathy, *Restitution: A family's fight for their heritage lost in the Holocaust*
Adult Nonfiction, \$19.95, ISBN: 978-1-89718-775-3

Kacer, Kathy with Jordana Lebowitz, *To Look a Nazi in the Eye: A teen's account of a war criminal trial*
YA Nonfiction, \$13.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-040-7

Kacer, Kathy, *Under the Iron Bridge*
YA Fiction, \$15.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-205-0

Rubenstein, Eli (compiled by) with March of the Living, *Witness: Passing the Torch of Holocaust Memory to New Generations*
Adult Nonfiction, \$32.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-149-7

Schulman, Faye, *A Partisan's Memoir: Woman of the Holocaust*
Adult Nonfiction, \$19.95, ISBN: 978-0-92900-576-8

Settington, Ken, *Branded by the Pink Triangle*
YA Nonfiction, \$15.95, ISBN: 978-1-926920-96-2

Silberstein Swartz, Sarah, *Heroines, Rescuers, Rabbis, Spies: Unsung Women of the Holocaust*

YA Nonfiction, \$19.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-262-3

For Teachers

Nesbitt, Shawntelle, *Holocaust Remembrance Series Teacher Resource: Elementary Social Justice Teacher Resource*

Educational Resource, \$149.00, ISBN: 978-1-89718-794-4

544 page Five-Part Comprehensive Guide