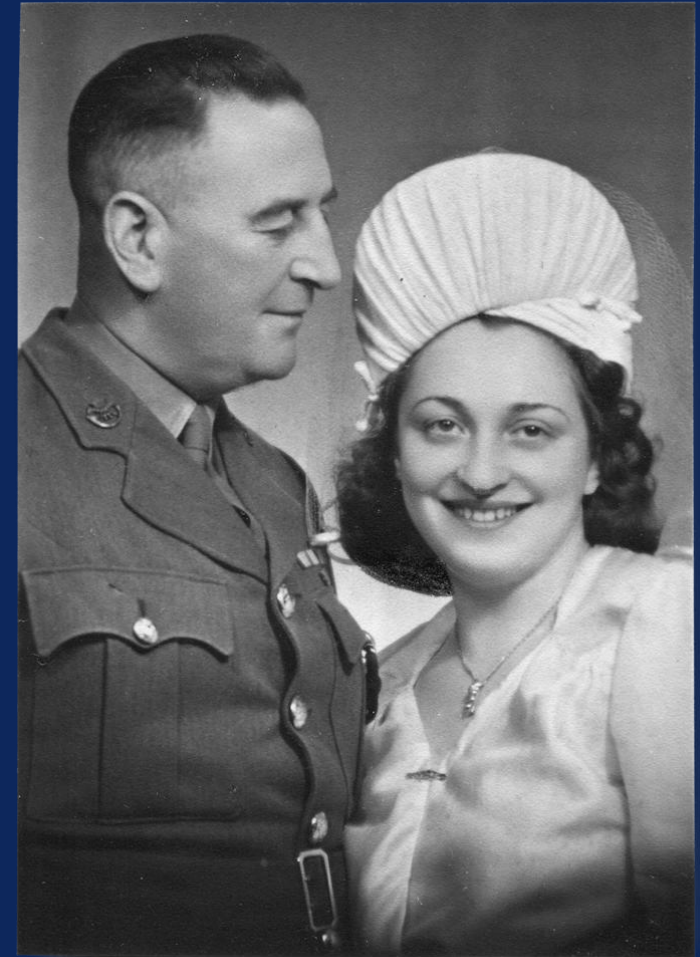


Enquiry Question:  
**What were the challenges that  
refugees and migrants faced when  
building their new lives in the UK?**

Lesson Title:  
**Building Families in a New Land:  
Home Life for Refugees**



Holocaust survivor Iby Knill met and married a British officer. They moved to England in 1947, where they built their lives. *Holocaust Centre North*

# What challenges would there be for refugees moving to a new country?

Short term challenges

Long term challenges

# Language Barriers

- Val and Ibi Ginsburg came to Yorkshire from Lithuania in 1948, aged 26 and 24. Val recalls:

“

*“Yes, English wasn’t a language I was familiar with and we had to learn it fast! And within a few months we were already managing to communicate and within six months we were already fluent. It didn’t take us long.”*

*Val Ginsburg, Holocaust Centre North*

- Do you think it would be easier to learn a new language when you were younger or older?
- Do you think being on your own or with family would make it easier to learn a new language?
- Why do you think it is important to learn the language of a new ‘home’ country quickly?

# Hobbies and Interests

- Rudi Leavor, a German Jew who came to the UK with his family as a child in 1937, became a dentist and settled in Bradford. In the 1950s, he joined the Leeds Philharmonic as a tenor. Music became an important feature of his life.
- Listen to his testimony [here](#) (1:48:12 to 1:52:00)
- In what ways has Rudi's love of music affected his life? Do you think it has helped him create a new life in the UK?



Rudi Leavor as a little boy in Berlin, *Holocaust Centre North*

# Hobbies and Interests

*“When I was a child I had been told by the teacher that I couldn’t draw and as a dutiful student I believed it. (After retiring in 1980, I visited my son Chris in Norway). Chris is a very talented artist and does beautiful watercolours (...) He said nature is such that everybody can paint and I did it and then got accepted on the basis of those sketches at the. Jacob Kramer College (Leeds Arts University). I did a full time course which I enjoyed and then went to Otley to do spinning and weaving and Swarthmore doing pottery and was interested in three dimensional texture and started off designing knitwear which fitted around the body.”*

Iby Knill, *Holocaust Centre North*

- Iby Knill, a Hungarian Jew who spent many years in concentration camps, married a British army officer and moved to the UK in 1946. They settled in Leeds in 1964. It wasn’t until many years later when Iby took up various hobbies.

Why are hobbies important to us?

How might they help a refugee settle into a new community?



Iby with her family, *Holocaust Centre North*



# Building Family & Relationship Breakdown

- Ellen Kerry Davis, a German Jew who came to the UK on the Kindertransport, settled in Wales with her husband after the war
- She married twice and had two children
- While listening to her testimony ([here](#), 1:05:17 to 1:10:03), how does she describe her family life? When does she describe she was happy?



Ellen Kerry Davis being interviewed by the USC Shoah Foundation in 1996

# Building Family & Relationship Breakdown

- Frieda Laird, a German Jew, came to Scotland in 1939 at age 18 to work as a domestic servant. Her entire family was killed in the Holocaust
- She recollects about the fact that her mother-in-law was German, which may have been why she married her son, George
- The marriage failed and Frieda was left to raise 5 children on her own in Paisley. She received state benefits but also worked as a pedlar and jewellery maker
- Listen to Frieda's testimony [here](#) (01:17 to 2:58)
- How would you characterise Frieda's attitude about her life and family?

“

FL: *“Well I tried my best but my life hasn’t been easy. But it could have been a lot worse, if I had been in a concentration camp, but lucky to escape that. When I think what my poor parents and my brothers came through, makes me very sad. I don’t know how people can be so cruel. I wouldn’t go a holiday over there now if you gave me a million dollars. And I don’t know how I ever married George Thomson... Because she came from Germany and I don’t know what it was. And I wasn’t pregnant at the time.”*

INT: *“Maybe just because of the Germany, that still reminded you a wee bit.”*

FL: *“He went after me and after me. I couldn’t get peace from him. I worked up in Burnside and he came up there and I think that’s what it was. And he said; “I’ll make a nice home for you, you know. I’m a joiner I can do a lot of things and make it really lovely”. He was very persuasive.”*

INT: *“And as Frieda [Myrna] said, you were a very pretty girl as well.”*

FL: *“Pardon?”*

INT: *“You were a very pretty girl as well and I think he obviously really liked you.”*

FL: *“Maybe that’s all, he did, right enough, I think. He quite cared for me in his own way, until he had a drink. In the drink he was even worse; he was even more caring and I hated it.”*

Frieda Laird, *Gathering the Voices*



# What is Antisemitism?

Antisemitism is prejudice or hostility against people of the Jewish faith. In the 1930s and 1940s, antisemitism often included targeting Jews based on lies about their racial inferiority, alleged role in controlling global finances, and other accusations against their religious activities (ex. Christ-killers).

Jews within German-occupied countries had to wear this yellow star on their clothing. "Jude" is German for "Jew".



- Antisemitism still exists today in most societies, alongside other forms of prejudice, such as racism or sexism
- During the war, antisemitism in Nazi Germany was so acceptable that Jewish groups were forced to wear yellow stars (see below) so that Jewish communities were visible, and more easily targeted
- During the Nazi era (1933-45), many Jewish communities fled Germany and other German-occupied territories, hoping that receptive nations would accept them

# Antisemitism and Discrimination in the UK



Wolfgang Homburger being interviewed by the USC Shoah Foundation in 1990

- Wolfgang Homburger was a German Jewish boy who came to England with his brothers on a Kindertransport
- Watch Wolfgang Homburger's interview with the USC Shoah Foundation [here](#) (49:49 to 50:32)

Listen and consider:

- What worried Wolfgang as a teenager?
- How does Wolfgang describe his experience of antisemitism in England?

# Antisemitism and Discrimination in the UK

Ruth Rogoff was a German-born Jewish girl who fled to Czechoslovakia in 1938, before coming to England one day before the war broke out in Europe.

Does it surprise you that Ruth found the teachers to be more antisemitic than the students? Why/why not? Ruth says that the experience made her stronger – why do you think that is?



“

*“When I was at Allerton, I went there as a scholarship child and at that time it was very posh. (It) was an all girls school then, never heard of Jews (...) but the teachers were more antisemitic than the girls. The teachers were very cruel some of them. And although I did suffer in the way that nobody likes to be taunted and nobody likes to be made little of, on the other hand I felt very superior in many ways. Inside me I believed I was better than they are. Don’t ask me why but I felt some of these teachers and two in particular whose names I will never forget (...). But it didn’t have the same effect on me. It didn’t destroy me let’s put it this way. The reverse, it made me stronger.”*

Ruth Rogoff, Holocaust Centre North

Ruth Rogoff and her brother,  
Holocaust Centre North

# How do these challenges connect?

None of these challenges happen on their own – they all connect and impact each other.

They may impact each other **positively**: for example, if you join a sports team you can make friends quicker.

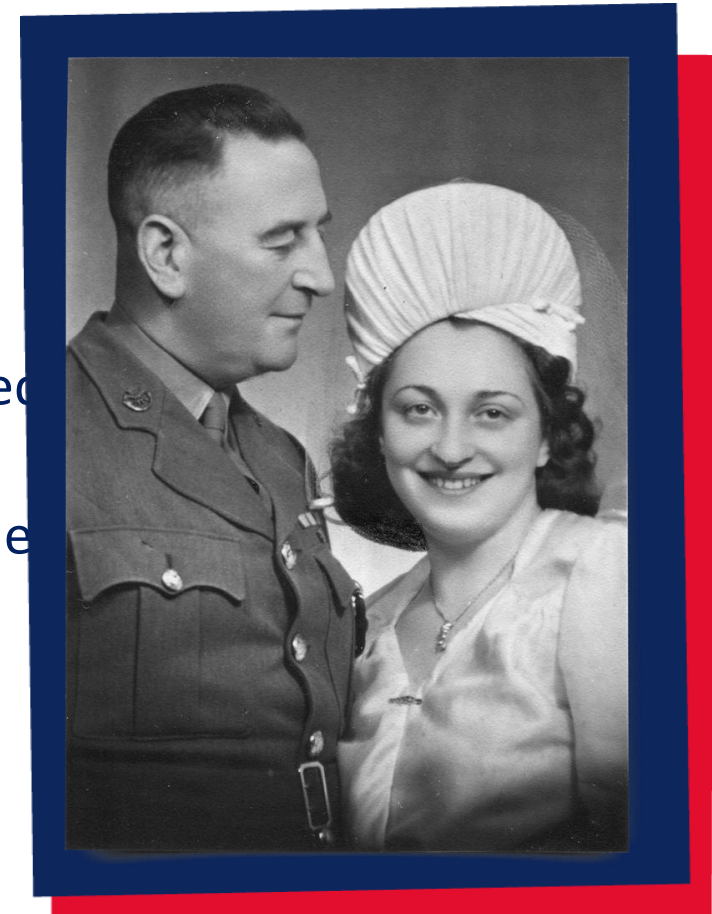
Or they may impact each other **negatively**: for example, if you don't speak English it may be harder to make new friends.

Think of a positive and a negative example for each connection.

# Summary: What were the challenges that refugees and migrants faced when building their new lives in the UK?

Discuss the following questions with your partner and be ready to share your thoughts (use evidence to support your answers):

- What were the challenges that refugees and migrants faced when building their lives in Britain?
- How did the refugees and migrants in this lesson overcome their challenges?
- How has living in Britain shaped refugees and migrants' lives? And how have migrants shaped Britain?



Iby Knill on her wedding day, *Holocaust Centre North*