

HANA'S SUITCASE

"...a delicate and moving introduction to Holocaust themes for children." **THE GLOBE AND MAIL**

Written by Emil Sher

Based on the book *Hana's Suitcase* by Karen Levine

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Recommended for ages 10 & up | Grades 5-12

Running time approximately 95 minutes

It is March, 2000. A child's suitcase arrives from Auschwitz at the tiny Holocaust Education Centre in Tokyo. Painted on the side are a name, Hana Brady, a birthdate and the word "Waisenkind" (orphan). Spurred on by children at the Centre, the curator embarks on a relentless search from Tokyo to Prague to Toronto to uncover the story of Hana and her fate at the hands of the Nazis.

Curriculum Connections: Holocaust, Anti-Racism

Hana's Suitcase

Karen Levine

A book study

Don Flaig

2003

Contents

- 1) Introduction to Teacher
- 2) Introduction to Students
- 3) Background information for teachers
(not contained in this file)
 - a) Map of Europe
 - b) Map of Czechoslovakia (showing Moravia)
 - c) The Holocaust
 - d) United Nations Declaration of Human Rights

4) Suggested Activities

- a) Locate Czechoslovakia on a map
- b) Build parallel timelines
- c) Write from different points of view
- d) Letter writing
- e) Write your autobiography
- f) Art: digital photography
- g) Writing poetry
- h) Creative writing: journals
- i) Creative writing and links to the Health Curriculum: a message in a bottle

5) Comprehension Questions and Answers

- a) Hana and George's life before the arrival of the Nazis
- b) Hana and George's life under Nazi control
- c) Hana and George at Theresienstadt
- d) Fumiko's search

6) Suggested Reading

7) Links

8) Time line answer keys and blanks

9) Copy masters for questions

- a) Hana and George wrote down all the things that were bothering them at the beginning when the Nazis began to persecute the Jews (page 25).
 - i) Have each student make a list of all the good things that happen to him or her and have them put their lists in a jar, which you could open later in the year, at Pentecost, for instance.
 - ii) Discuss the value of writing down things that make you sad or angry, instead of acting out and doing something that makes things worse (see the Health Curriculum Wellness Outcomes for cross-curricular possibilities).

11) Links to Art

a) Have the students do art in various media of the symbols in the book, such as the Star of David, trains, playground swings, a message in a bottle:

- i) Watercolour
- ii) Pencil crayons
- iii) Fabric arts

b) Make bread dough ornaments with names of the people you are giving them to carved into them.

Reading Comprehension Questions

(with answers)

(Note: questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy. 1-2: Knowledge, 3-4:

Comprehension, 5-6: Application, 7-8: Analysis, 9-10: Synthesis, 11-12: Evaluation)

Hana and George's Life in Nove Mesto

BEFORE THE NAZIS CAME

- 1) Where is Nove Mesto?
(p.5, middle of what was then Czechoslovakia, in a province called Moravia)
- 2) What was Hana's job in the store?
(p. 8, helper, kept the shelves stocked, clean and tidy, slice yeast, chisel lumps off the sugar loaf, weigh spices, twist paper into cones to hold candy)
- 3) What can you say about the Brady family and their role in the town of Nove Mesto?
(p. 6, Father was an amateur actor, he called the cross-country ski races, he was a volunteer firefighter, the Brady family welcomed artists in their home and fed them, p. 8, They held the general store in the town, Mother took food to the poor people who lived on the edge of town)
- 4) How would you summarize Hana and George's childhood in Nove Mesto?
(answers will vary: happy, normal, lots of friends, p. 15: played on the swings, p. 16: played in winter making snow forts, skating, close family ties)
- 5) What questions would you ask Hana and George in an interview about their days in Nove Mesto during the time before the Nazis?
(answers will vary)

- 6) What facts would you select to show that Hana and George were well accepted by the children of Nove Mesto?
(no one noticed or cared that they were Jewish, they went to school and took part in the school plays (picture on page 7), they played with the other children, skated on the pond, built snow forts)
- 7) What are the parts of their life in Nove Mesto that are most like your life now?
(sports, school, snow forts, close family ties, etc.)
- 8) Why do you think Mr. and Mrs. Brady were such generous people?
(their parents taught them to be generous, their religion encouraged this, they had much to give, etc.)
- 9) Suppose you could go back in time and play with Hana and George. What would you do to prepare them for the coming time when they would not be allowed to play with the other children?
(answers will vary)
- 10) Imagine your family lived like the Bradys. Who in your family would do what? i.e. manage the store, be a volunteer firefighter, take food to families on the outside of town, etc.
- 11) What is your opinion of the life that Hana and George had in Nove Mesto?
(answers will vary).
- 12) Would it have been better if Hana and George knew what was going to happen to them when the Nazis came? Why?
(answers will vary).

Hana and George's Life in Nove Mesto

AFTER THE NAZIS CAME TO POWER

- 1) What was the example of foreshadowing that Karen Levine used, on page 19?
(Hana's little walnut shell boat sank, on New Year's Eve)
- 2) List three things that Hana and George were no longer allowed to do?
(couldn't leave the house at certain hours of the day, couldn't shop at certain stores, couldn't travel, couldn't go to movies, skate on the pond, go to the gym, etc.)

- 3) How would you contrast your life with Hana and George's life now?
(answers will vary)
- 4) What can you say about how the Brady family was treated, at this point, in Nove Mesto?
(answers will vary)
- 5) What approach would you use to make you feel better, if you were in Hana and George's place, when their friends were no longer allowed to play with them?
(Hana and George put their feelings on paper and buried them in a bottle'students should come up with other ideas, such as might have been taught in the Health curriculum)
- 6) If you could choose one thing to make Hana and George a little happier at this point in their lives, what would it be?
- 7) Why do you think it was so important for Mr. Brady to hear the news on the radio? (p. 26, They needed to make sense of everything happening, they wanted to protect themselves and their children, etc.)
- 8) What was the function or the reason behind all these laws against the Jews? (it gave the Nazis power, it gave Hitler a reason to go to war, it made the German people forget Hitler's evil acts)
- 9) What would have happened if the other townspeople helped the Bradys out?
(p. 26, the Nazis would have punished their whole families or arrested them)
- 10) Imagine you could change history. Propose a solution that would have protected the Jews in Czechoslovakia.
(answers will vary)
- 11) What choice would you have made if you were Hana's or George's friend?
- 12) What is your opinion of what the Nazis did to the Jewish people during the Second World War?

Hana and George's life in Theresienstadt

- 1) Who was Hana's close friend in the barracks?
(p. 78, Ella)
- 2) What were the lists at the main entrance of Hana's building for?
(p. 78, announced who was leaving by train)
- 3) How would you compare Hana's experience in the

barracks with George's?

(Hana had to stay inside, George learned to be a plumber, Hana was younger)

- 4) How would you summarize Hana's experience in Theresienstadt?
(This was a time of loneliness, fear and hunger, away from her parents, etc.)
- 5) What examples can you find to show that people stuck up for each other in Theresienstadt?
(secret classes in the attic, Ella helped Hana, they saved food for each other, they made games, they sang songs to cheer each up, etc.)
- 6) Identify one way that you would like someone to help you out if you were in Hana or George's place in Theresienstadt.
- 7) Why do you think people helped each other out so much in Theresienstadt?
(answers will vary, but should include ideas of courage, the need to stand up against a common enemy, people show their best qualities under adversity, etc.)
- 8) Why do you think the Nazis kept the people in such poor conditions?
(they were easier to control, it would be very expensive, they were victims of hate laws, they were being persecuted, etc.)
- 9) Suppose you could change one thing to make life easier in Theresienstadt. What would it be?
(answers will vary)
- 10) Can you think of an original way for people to keep up their spirits under terrible conditions such as there were in Theresienstadt?
- 11) What would you recommend we do if we saw people being treated as less worthy than us, here in Canada?
(answers will vary, but might include ideas of contacting MLAs or MPs, writing to the editor of a paper, speaking about it in a classroom meeting, talking to parents, etc.)
- 12) What would you recommend we do to see that no one is ever again treated as the Jewish people were treated by the Nazis?
(answers will vary)

Fumiko's Search

1. How did Fumiko come to possess Hana's suitcase? (p. 12, she spoke personally with the assistant director of the museum of the concentration camp at Auschwitz)
2. How did the children in Tokyo figure out how old Hana was when she was sent to Auschwitz? (p. 20, the date on the suitcase was a clue)
3. Rephrase in your own words: .It would be easier for them to put themselves in her shoes. (see page 41) (easier to understand how Hana lived and what she went through, easier to understand how Hana felt, what she was like as a child)
4. What can you say about how Fumiko kept on searching for information about Hana? (she was very tenacious, she wouldn't stop, she was driven by curiosity and a need to know more, etc.)
5. What questions would you ask of Fumiko, in an interview?
6. What other way would you plan to find out information about somebody you knew very little about?
7. Why do you think people are so interested in the Holocaust? (it was such a terrible thing to do, it causes us fear to think we might go through something like it, we do not want such things to happen again, we have trouble understanding it, etc.)
8. Compare Fumiko's search with a detective story you have read.
9. What way would you design a museum to tell about the Holocaust? Write briefly about how you would display pictures and objects, and how you would interest young people in what you have to share. Make a little sketch of the building you are imagining.
10. What do you predict will happen next with Fumiko's museum?
11. What objects would you select to interest young people in your town or city in learning more about the Holocaust?
12. How important is it, in your opinion, for Fumiko to continue to teach us about the Holocaust?

Suggested Reading

Other books for student to read on similar topics and themes:

- a) *The Devil's Arithmetic*: Jane Yolen, Scholastic
 - i) Tells the story of a young Jewish girl who is transported back in time to experience life in a concentration camp.
- b) *The Diary of Anne Frank*
- c) *Number the Stars*: Lois Lowry, Dell
 - i) Ten-year-old Annemarie Johansen and her friend live in Copenhagen in the 1940's and must deal with the changes the Nazis bring to their lives.
- d) *The Breadwinner*: Deborah Ellis, Scholastic
 - i) Parvana is a young girl in Afghanistan. We experience life under the Taliban in very recent times.
(1) See also the sequel: *Parvana's Journey*
- e) *The Secret of Gabi's Dresser*: Kathy Kacer, Second Story Press
 - i) The heroine, Gabi, recounts how as a young Jewish girl she lived on a family farm in Eastern Europe during the Second World War.
- f) *Clara's War*: Kathy Kacer, Second Story Press
 - i) A wonderful new work of historical fiction by the Silver Birch Awardwinning author of *The Secret of Gabi's Dresser*.

Tokyo Holocaust Education Resource Center

<http://www.ne.jp/asahi/holocaust/tokyo/English/index.html>

Small Wings Site

<http://www.ne.jp/asahi/holocaust/tokyo/toppage7.htm>

Second Story Press

<http://www.secondstorypress.on.ca/>

A CBC site about Hana's Suitcase, including more pictures and comments from the author, Karen Levine, Fumiko Ishioka, George Brady and members of the Small Wings

http://radio.cbc.ca/programs/thismorning/sites/people/hanassuitcase_010119/hana_main.html

Email link to the museum in Tokyo

Holocaust@Tokyo.email.ne.jp

Unicef Cartoons showing children's rights

<http://www.unicef.org/crcartoons/>

Answer keys

Fumiko's Timeline

Winter – 2000

Fumiko met a few Holocaust survivors in Israel. Their optimism and joy of living astonished her.

Winter – 2000

Fumiko visits Auschwitz. She asks to be loaned some objects that belonged to a child in a concentration camp.

March – 2000

Hana's suitcase is a mystery to the children in Japan. Fumiko promises to find out about .Hanna.. Fumiko writes letters and gets a reply from Auschwitz saying Hana was in Theresienstadt.

March – 2000

Fumiko learns that, although Theresienstadt was a terrible place, children were taught art there. Could a drawing be from Hana?

April – 2000

Fumiko receives photos of Hana's drawings.

Spring – 2000

The children form 'Small Wings'. They write poems and make a newsletter. Fumiko opens the exhibit.

Terezin

June – 2000

More and more people come to the museum. Fumiko decides to go to Terezin.

July – 2000

She flies to Prague and takes a bus to Terezin. The museum is closed.

July – 2000

Fumiko cries. She decides to go back in and meets Ludmila, who helps her. Fumiko learns that Hana had a brother who may be alive. Fumiko rushes back to Prague.

Prague

July – 2000

Fumiko meets Mr. Kotouc in Prague who is George's friend. She goes back to Tokyo with George's address.

Tokyo

August – 2000

Fumiko writes to George.

Toronto

August – 2000

George receives Fumiko's letter.

Tokyo

September – 2000

Fumiko receives George's letter and the photos of Hana.

Tokyo

March – 2001

George and his daughter, Lara Hana, meet Fumiko and the Small Wings in Tokyo.

Hana and George's Timeline

NOVE MESTO

1930s Hana and George lived in Nove Mesto, the only Jewish children.

1938 The Nazis were in power in Germany and marched into Czechoslovakia. Some Jews left for America. Hana's candle went out.

1939 The Nazis declared the Jews evil. George and Hana not allowed to go to the movies, parks, skating. They put their thoughts on paper in a bottle, buried under the swings.

Autumn, 1940

Spring, 1941

Before Hana could enter Grade 3, Jewish children were no longer allowed to attend school. Hana's mother is taken away.

Autumn, 1941

Hana's mother sends her gifts made of bread, from Ravensbruck. They are forced to wear stars. Hana's father is taken away.

Winter, 1941

1942 Uncle Ludvik comes to take Hana and George to live with him and Aunt Hedda. Silva finds her way across town to be with them.

May, 1942

Hana and George are deported to Theresienstadt. They spend four days in a warehouse where Hana celebrates her 11th birthday.

May, 1942

The Deportation Centre
They travel by train to Theresienstadt. The trip takes a few hours. George and Hana are separated.

Theresienstadt

1942 – 1943

Hana meets Ella. She is confined to the building. She attends secret classes in the attic of Kinderheim L410. She takes art lessons from Friedl Dicker-Brandeis
Theresienstadt Hana finally gets to see George again.

1943 – 1944

Their grandmother arrives, and dies there after three months.

September, 1944

George is sent away to the east, to Auschwitz.

October 23, 1944

Hana and Ella go by train to Auschwitz.
January 1945 Auschwitz is liberated. George is freed.

May, 1945

George arrives back to Nove Mesto. Months later he learns that Hana was killed on the day she arrived at Auschwitz.

March, 2001

George and his daughter, Lara Hana visit the Center in Tokyo.

Fumiko's Timeline

Winter 2000

Winter 2000

March 2000

March 2000

April 2000

Spring 2000

Terezin

June 2000

July 2000

July 2000

Prague

July 2000

Tokyo

August 2000

Toronto

August 2000

Tokyo

September,

2000

Tokyo

March 2001

(Hana and George's Timeline

Nove Mesto

1930s

1938

1939

Autumn, 1940

Spring, 1941

Autumn, 1941

Winter, 1941 .

1942

May, 1942

May, 1942

Deportation Centre Theresienstadt

1942 – 1943

Theresienstadt

Theresienstadt

1943 – 1944

September

1944

October 23, 1944

January, 1945

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March, 2001

Timeline

Name _____ date _____

Date events

Hana and George's Life in Nove Mesto

BEFORE THE NAZIS CAME

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MY MUSEUM

10. What do you predict will happen next with Fumiko's museum? What could Fumiko do next?
11. What objects would you select to interest young people in your town or city in learning more about the Holocaust?
12. How important is it, in your opinion, for Fumiko to continue to teach us about the Holocaust?