



Jewish Refugees and Shanghai Educator Guide

In the 1930s, as the Nazi scourge spread across Europe, all doors appeared to be closed to Jewish migration. The international city of Shanghai was the exception. It became the temporary home to more than 20,000 Jewish refugees from Germany, Austria, Poland and Lithuania – the largest single haven for settlement on the planet.

This February the **Jewish Museum of Maryland** will host this very special exhibit created by the **Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum**, hopefully as the first stop on a new national tour. *Jewish Refugees and Shanghai* contains 52 panels detailing the extraordinary history of an unexpected community. Weaving together the first-person experiences of more than two dozen individuals who lived in the Shanghai Jewish ghetto, this exhibit details the extraordinary history of an unexpected community.

This multi-lingual exhibit (the panels are printed in both Chinese and English), explores not just the journey and introduction to life in Shanghai but the creation and integration of these Jewish refugees with both their Chinese neighbors and the already-established Sephardic Jewish and Russian Jewish communities. *Jewish Refugees and Shanghai* does not shy away from the difficulties faced by these Jewish refugees, including the creation of the Hongkou Ghetto and the subsequent loss of jobs and freedom of movement they experienced.

Jewish Refugees and Shanghai is a story of resilience, cross-cultural acceptance, and the renewal of hope in the face of adversity. Bringing this exhibit to the Jewish Museum of Maryland will allow us to not only share this important, oft-overlooked story with our own community, but to reach out to the local Chinese American community.

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Background information for Jewish Refugees and Shanghai Exhibition

Early Jewish Immigration to China

Jews had arrived in China by the Middle Ages, if not before, as merchants and traders from Persia and the Middle East. Jewish merchants were an important part of the spice trade as they were able to form a bridge between East and West, trading goods with fellow Jews in other countries through the common bond of the Hebrew language. A Jewish merchant in China could trade with a Jew in Egypt and a Jew in France because they all understood enough Hebrew to form a common trade language. Jewish merchants flourished, trading spices and silks from the East for furs, quills and ink, jewelry, and other products from the West.

Shanghai

In 1843, Shanghai was opened to foreign trade. Many important Jewish trade families from Iraq established posts in Shanghai including the Sassoons and the Kadoories. Before World War I, there were approximately 700 Jews in Shanghai- about 400 were Iraqi Jews, 250 from Europe and 50 Americans. At this time in Shanghai, there were three different synagogues and at least 12 Jewish magazines published in English, German, and Russian.

After the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, thousands of Jewish Russians fled to Shanghai. The Ohel Moshe Synagogue was built in Shanghai by Russian Jews who settled there in the 1920s. The number of European Jewish refugees swelled after 1932 as Jews from Germany and later Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Eastern Europe fled Nazi Europe. Approximately 18,000 Jews fled Europe from 1933 until Japan closed the port in December 1941.

On December 7, 1941, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawai'i and the Allied Forces declared war on Japan. Subsequently, Iraqi Jews living in Shanghai were imprisoned by Japanese occupying forces as "alien enemies" because of their British nationality and many of their assets were

seized. Aid to the Jewish refugees were cut off from Allied countries and the tenuous situation for the Jewish refugees in Shanghai quickly became dire.

In the years following World War II, the Jewish refugees in Shanghai slowly moved away-joining Jewish communities all over the world including Israel, North America, and Australia.

According to the World Jewish Congress, the current Jewish population of China is approximately 2,500 (or 0.0002% of the total population), located entirely in major cities including Shanghai, Beijing, and Kaifeng (which is home to a Jewish community dating back to approximately the 9th century).

Ho Feng Shan

Ho Feng Shan served as the Chinese Consul-General in Vienna in 1938. Following the *Anschluss*, or the German annexation of Austria, in March 1938, an urgency spread among Austria's Jews to find a way to leave the country. The only way the Nazis allowed Jews to leave was with an entry visa to another country. Most countries had strict immigration quotas or closed their doors to Jews entirely. Ho Feng Shan defied his superior and issued entry visas to the port city of Shanghai. Between 1938 and 1940, it is estimated that Ho Feng Shan issued thousands of visas to Austrian Jews trying to escape. The Jews with visas to Shanghai could reach China either through boats that were leaving from Italy or by land across the Soviet Union. Shanghai visas also allowed Jews to travel and reach other destinations around the world including Palestine and the Philippines. Because of his bravery in defying orders from a superior, issuing visas to any Jew who asked and saving thousands of lives in the process, Ho Feng Shan was posthumously awarded the title of Righteous Among the Nations in 2000 by Yad Vashem in Israel.

Chiune Sugihara

Chiune Sugihara arrived in Kaunas, Lithuania in 1938 as the Japanese Consul-General. After Germany and the Soviet Union invaded Poland, Polish refugees fled to Lithuania to find safety. By 1940, most of Europe was closed to the Jews and their situation became desperate. Lithuania was annexed to the Soviet Union and all diplomats were given two months to leave. The Dutch consul in Kaunas, Jan Zwartendijk, began stamping papers for Jewish refugees to go to Curacao, and Suriname, Dutch colonies in the Caribbean that did not require entry visas. With the only option open for the Polish refugees to travel being to the East, hundreds of refugees stood day and night in front of the Japanese consulate in order to get transit visas that would allow them to travel to Japan via the Soviet Union. Sugihara risked his career to issue as many travel visas as he could to everyone who asked. Sugihara issued thousands of visas to Jews who were then able to travel through the Soviet Union to Kobe, Japan. Included among the Jews that Sugihara helped to save were Rabbis and students of the Mir Yeshiva, which became the only Yeshiva in Europe to survive the Holocaust. The Jews that Sugihara helped bring to

Japan were later sent to Shanghai in order to consolidate the Jewish refugees under Japanese control. In 1984, Chiune Sugihara was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Life in the Hongkou ghetto

In 1942, Josef Meisinger, the Nazi Gestapo representative in Japan, visited Shanghai and introduced his “Meisinger Plan”- his version of the Final Solution for Jews in Japanese territory- to the Japanese authority. The Japanese refused to implement his plan and kill off all the Jews but on February 18, 1943, the Japanese announced the formation of a “Designated Area for Stateless Refugees.” All refugees who fled to Shanghai from Europe since 1937 were to move to an approximately one square mile area of the Hongkou District. There were approximately 18,000 Jewish refugees who were now living in the Hongkou Ghetto along with thousands of local Chinese residents. Passes were needed to work or attend school in areas outside the ghetto and only a small number were given. The economic situation quickly turned dire as most refugees were unable to find work while in the ghetto and aid from the JDC and other Western sources were cut off during the war. They relied on local aid organizations and charity from begging on the streets. With overcrowding and poor sanitation, diseases spread quickly and quality of life turned very poor. Despite the poor conditions, life continued in Hongkou and the European refugees attempted to maintain their cultural identity while enjoying a cordial relationship with the local Chinese population. The ghetto was officially liberated after the war in September 1945 and the Jewish refugees slowly emigrated out of China over the next dozen years.

Jewish Refugees and Shanghai Exhibit Vocabulary

The *Jewish Refugees and Shanghai* exhibit explores the often untold story of how Jewish people sought shelter in Shanghai, China leading up to and through World War II. During this time, Jewish people faced extreme persecution in Europe, particularly in Nazi Germany, where the Nuremberg Laws and other laws stripped German Jews of their citizenship and many of their rights. The Nazis established concentration camps and forced-labor camps to hold not only political opponents, but Jewish people and other minorities. Things turned violent in 1938 with Kristallnacht, two days of mob violence targeting Jewish people in Germany and Austria. The Nazi desire to rid Germany of Jewish people led to the Holocaust, a state-sponsored genocide, which systematically killed 6 million Jewish people and 11 million people total.

While Jewish people were allowed to emigrate from Nazi Germany prior to the start of World War II, very few countries were willing to take them in. However, with the help of Chinese diplomat Dr. Ho Feng Shan, some Jewish refugees could secure the documents necessary to flee Europe and emigrate to Shanghai, China. 18,000 Jewish people sought refuge in Shanghai from 1933 - 1941. In 1943, 15,000 of these refugees, alongside many of their Chinese neighbors, were forced into the Hongkou Ghetto by the Imperial Japanese forces.

This exhibit, on loan from the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, tells the stories of these Jewish refugees, their experiences, and the connections they made with their Chinese neighbors. The exhibit is bilingual, with text in English and Simplified Chinese. In preparation for your school's visit to the Jewish Museum of Maryland and the *Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum*, we have created a short vocabulary list of words that your students will encounter while exploring this exhibit.

The Chinese name for the exhibit is: 犹太难民与上海 (yóutài nànmín yǔ shànghǎi), and we have organized this vocabulary list into three sections based upon this title:

犹太(人): words relating to Judaism and the Jewish people

难民: words relating to refugees

上海: words relating to people's experiences while living in Shanghai during World War II

犹太(人):

Character	Pinyin	English	Description
犹太人	yóutàirén	A Jewish person, or Jewish people	Some of the earliest Jewish immigrants to China arrived during the Northern Song Dynasty (960 – 1127) and settled in its capital Kaifeng.
犹太会堂	yóutàihuitáng	Synagogue	A synagogue is a Jewish house of worship.
成人礼	chénggrénlǐ	Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah (coming of age ceremony)	A Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah is a coming of age ceremony in the Jewish faith when a boy or girl (respectively) reads aloud from the Torah, the Jewish holy text, for the first time.
拉比	lābǐ	Rabbi	A rabbi is the leader of a Jewish congregation. In Hebrew, the word rabbi means “teacher.”
反犹太主义	fǎnyóutàizhǔyì	Anti-Semitism	Prejudice or hatred towards Jewish people

难民:

Character	Pinyin	English	Description
难民	nànmín	Refugee	A refugee is a person who has been forced to leave their home country due to persecution, natural disasters, etc.
避难	bìnàn	To take refuge	To take refuge is to seek a safe place. In this context, it means seeking shelter from persecution. An estimated 18,000 Jewish people sought refuge in Shanghai between 1933 and 1941.
签证	qiānzhèng	Visa	A piece of documentation needed to emigrate or visit another country. Getting a visa was one of the few ways Jewish refugees could escape Nazi Germany. China was one of few countries to offer visas to Jewish refugees during this time period.

上海:

Character	Pinyin	English	Description
二战	Èrzhàn	World War II	A large-scale war from 1939-1945 fought between the Allies (The United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union) and the Axis Powers (Nazi Germany, Italy, and Imperial Japan).
何风山博士	Hé Fēngshān bóshì	Dr. Ho Feng Shan	A Chinese diplomat in Austria in 1938, Dr. Ho Feng Shan rejected anti-Semitism and issued visas to Jewish people trying to escape persecution; these visas allowed Jewish refugees to immigrate to Shanghai.
摩西会堂	Móxī huìtáng	Ohel Moshe Synagogue	The Ohel Moshe Synagogue was built in 1907 by Russian Jewish immigrants to China. Some Jewish refugees, such as Jerry Lindenstrauss had their Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah ceremonies in the Ohel Moshe Synagogue. Today, it is one of two remaining synagogues in Shanghai; it is also home to the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum.
虹口区	Hóngkǒu Qū	Hongkou District	In 1943, the Imperial Japanese authorities forced all Jewish refugees to live in the Hongkou District, a small portion of the city that was walled and barricaded. Conditions were poor, but despite this, Jewish refugees tried to improve the living conditions and still maintained their cultural identity.
阿妈	āmā	Amah	A nanny or nursemaid who watches over a family's children or performs household chores. Some Jewish refugees hired Chinese Amahs, and paid them in food, which was a scarce commodity. Jewish refugees Peter Max and Chaya Small remember their Amahs fondly.
以色列	Yísèliè	Israel	After the conclusion of World War II, many of the Jewish refugees living in Shanghai left to start a new life in Israel and the United States rather than return to Europe.
感激	gǎnjī	To be grateful	Sonya Mühlberger, born in Shanghai to Jewish refugee parents, described her feelings about Shanghai as “感激.”

Jewish Refugees and Shanghai Exhibit

Reference Maps



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hongkou_District

Jewish Refugees and Shanghai Exhibit

Reference Maps

Map showing routes taken by Jewish refugees from Europe to Shanghai, China.



Resources for the Classroom

Pre-visit Lessons and Resources

- From the Centropa Website
Centropa is an interactive website that collects stories, oral histories, and images from Jews living in central and Eastern Europe.
Kurt Brodmann tells the story of his family's escape during the Holocaust. His parents survived the war by fleeing to Shanghai:
Video: <http://www.centropa.org/node/52714>
Student worksheet for the video:
<http://www.centropa.org/sites/default/files/brodmanndiscussionpoints.pdf>
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Information on Shanghai refugees, including links to maps, photographs, and oral histories:
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-and-austrian-jewish-refugees-in-shanghai>
- Yad Vashem
Information on the Righteous Among the Nations
<https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/about-the-righteous.html>

Books about Jewish Refugees and Shanghai

- Chang, Stephen. 2005. Shanghai Ghetto. DVD
<https://www.amazon.com/Shanghai-Ghetto-Stephen-Chang/dp/B0006Q93A6>
- Eber, Irene. 2008. Voices from Shanghai: Jewish Exiles in Wartime China.
<https://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/chicago/Vbo5997340html>
- Heppner, Ernest. 1995. Shanghai Refuge: A Memoir of the World War II Jewish Ghetto.
<https://www.amazon.com/Shanghai-Refuge-Memoir-Jewish-Ghetto/dp/0803272812>
- Levi, Karen. 2017. Love and Luck: A Young Woman from Berlin to Shanghai to San Francisco
<https://www.amazon.com/Love-Luck-Journey-Shanghai-Francisco/dp/1542929768>
- Kacer, Kathy. 2013. Shanghai Escape. Second Story Press
<https://secondstorypress.ca/kids/shanghai-escape>

- Kaplan, Vivienne Jeanette. 2004. Ten Green Bottles: The True Story of One Family's Journey from War-Torn Austria to the Ghettoes of Shanghai.
<https://us.macmillan.com/books/8780312330552>
- Mochizuki, Ken. 2010. Passage to Freedom: The Sugihari Story.
<https://www.amazon.com/Passage-Freedom-Sugihara-Story-Shine/dp/1584301570>