

TEACHER'S GUIDE

*SEEKING REFUGE*

By

Irene N. Watts

Illustrated

By

Kathryn E. Shoemaker

Answers may be given orally, in writing or in art. Responses can be as a class, individually, in pairs, or in groups.

*BACKGROUND TO THE NOVEL:*

The first *Kindertransport* left Berlin, Germany on December 1, 1938. Onboard were 200 unaccompanied children, all aged under sixteen, at risk from Nazi terror. The Rescue trains continued to bring refugee children out of Nazi Europe. By the start of the Second World War on September 3, 1939, almost ten thousand children had been saved.

2018 marks the 80th anniversary of the enterprise.

*Irene N. Watts arrived in England on December 10, 1938, at the age of 7,*

Why was the rescue necessary? In *GOOD-BYE MARIANNE*, the graphic novel that is a prequel for *SEEKING REFUGE*, Marianne says: "Mothers don't send their children away." Her mother replies that she is cannot keep her daughter safe any longer, not anywhere the Nazis are.

The world Marianne left behind was a dangerous time for someone considered to be non Aryan (See Glossary for definition). Many people were targeted, but Jews were

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the favorite scapegoats. Their citizenship was taken away, so they had no redress before the law. Children were expelled from school and were forbidden to mix with German children. All Jews had to change their names to Israel and Sara. Marianne's father is on the run from the Gestapo for selling a book by a Jewish author. Many of the fathers of the children on the *Kindertransport* were in Concentration camps.

### ARRIVAL

1. The reader knows how Marianne feels on arriving in England. Do you think all the children felt the same way? Might some feel differently? How and why?
2. Why do you think sponsors agreed to take in child refugees?
  - a. What prompted Aunt Vera to 'accept' Marianne?
  - b. What prompted Auntie Vi in Wales to do so?
  - c. How might you feel if your parents agreed to take in a refugee child? How could it affect family dynamics?
3. Discuss ways in which Aunt Vera might have made Marianne feel more welcome. Show two examples illustrating her hostility towards the child. Show another example of her ignorance of what was happening in Germany, Austria and in Czechoslovakia.
4. In Chapter 3 Marianne becomes lost in the park. Do you think this can be looked at as a metaphor? Is she 'lost' in other ways? Discuss the various meanings of Loss and Lost.
5. Marianne's life changes greatly in the course of one year. Discuss.
6. Give some examples that show Marianne's independence and strength of character.

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7. SEEKING REFUGE illustrates several references to the kind of life Marianne led in Nazi Germany. Why does she run away from a display in a bookstore? How many other references are there throughout the book?
8. What does the scene with 'Horace' and Marianne's inability to eat her supper that evening, tell you about Marianne and her religion?
9. Marianne thinks *I hate this word 'refugee'*. Explain why.
10. *SEEKING REFUGE* is based on Watts' novel *REMEMBER ME* Tundra Books, 2000  
Describe the basic differences between a novel and a graphic novel. Do you have a preference? Explain.
11. Choose an incident to dramatise from the graphic novel, using your own words.  
Rehearse with your chosen group or partner and then present your scene to the class.
12. Write an imaginary journal entry for *any* character, major or minor, mentioned in the book.
13. Write an imaginary dialogue between Marianne's mother and grandmother in Germany, when an offer of work is sent to Mrs. Kohn, from England. And between Mrs. Kohn and her new employer before she finds her daughter.
14. Marianne does not have much room in her case for personal possessions. Bring something from home – or describe an object of personal or family significance.  
Share the story. The children of the *Kindertransport* were forbidden to bring anything of value.
15. Write or draw about a moment that changed your life.
16. What do you think are the questions the book does not or cannot answer?

## SUGGESTIONS FROM THE ARTIST:

*This story takes place in the past and is based on historical events. This requires the illustrator to do much research as to what things looked like, the clothes people wore, how they spoke and treated each other.*

1. Imagine you are the illustrator of *SEEKING REFUGE*:

What will you do first?

How would you figure out what to research?

What kinds of things would you research in terms of looking at things? This means what kind of systematic process would you use?

Where would you look and how would you keep records of what you have discovered?

2. If you have read this book you now know that Marianne feels sad and lonely most of the time. Looking at the illustrations again, what does the illustrator do to convey this sadness in the drawings?

You also know from your reading that it is a scary time for everyone. War means there is a relentless threat of bombs. What do you notice in the illustrations that conveys that feeling of threat?

3. A challenge for anyone illustrating is to portray facial expressions.

Create a character and then experiment with the face and body language/position to convey a variety of emotions,

### *FURTHER READING:*

*RESCUING THE CHILDREN*

*THE STORY OF THE KINDERTRANSPORT*

## Seeking Refuge, Teacher's Guide

By

Deborah Hodge, Tundra books 2012

A highly recommended nonfiction book, with original photographs a time line, and suggestions for further study. Details of web sites are also given.

(c)

Irene N. Watts

Kathryn E. Shoemaker