

Name: _____

Date: _____

Class: _____

WORLD WAR II

Jewish Refugees in Shanghai

West Meets East As A Safe Haven Is Formed

Shanghai has functioned as an important haven for Jewish refugees from anti-Semitism throughout the twentieth century. After British victories over a weak Chinese government in the 1840's, Shanghai became an open city, governed by Western imperialists. Persian Jews with British allegiance, like the Sassoon family, settled there by the end of the nineteenth century. The ease of entry into Shanghai and the existence of a Jewish community there made Shanghai into a possible haven for Jews fleeing persecution. Sephardic Jews in the Turkish Empire, worried about being drafted into the Turkish army during World War I, fled eastward along the shores of the Indian Ocean; many ended up in Shanghai. Russian Jews fled both the socialist revolution in 1917 and the anti-Semitic policies of Joseph Stalin in the 1920's. They poured into northern China and many reached as far south as Shanghai.

The largest group of refugees fled from the Nazis in the late 1930's, when other potential places of refuge were closed off. The Shanghai Jews were among the last to leave Germany and Austria, having experienced the full brunt of Nazi persecution for six years. After Kristallnacht the only possibility of escape for most German Jews was Shanghai, with no visa requirements. From German concentration camps to Fascist Italian ships sailing through the Suez Canal to cosmopolitan and lawless Shanghai, these refugees escaped Europe just before war broke out. Arriving in Shanghai penniless, they were greeted by two already thriving Jewish communities, one Russian Ashkenazi and the other Persian Sephardic. By the time that World War II broke out, Shanghai housed about 1,000 Jews of Baghdadi origin, 7,000 Russian Jews, and 16,000 to 18,000 Jews from Germany, Austria, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. After 1943 the refugees who had arrived after 1937 were confined in a bombed-out slum by Japanese occupation forces, the only ghetto outside of Europe. This community rapidly dispersed after 1945 to Israel and the United States, with small contingents emigrating to Canada, Australia, and back to Europe. By the 1950's very few European Jews were left in Shanghai.

From The Shanghai Jewish Community Oral History Project, Bates, College, directed by Steve Hochstadt,
former Professor of History.

<http://abacus.bates.edu/muskie-archives/Collections/OralHistoryFindingAids/ShanghaiOHFA.shtml>

YOUR TASK: On the tables throughout the room, you will find a Station about a different aspect of this part of World War II. At each table the materials necessary to answer the questions for each of the following three Stations will be provided. You should allow for roughly 15 - 20 minutes at each Station.

STATION #1: Background Information

Jewish migration to Shanghai, China, preceded the outbreak of World War II but it was during the war that the largest influx of Jews came to this area. While Shanghai provided a safe haven from Nazi persecution in Europe, challenges were faced in not only adapting to a new and foreign country and culture but also a country at war with Japan. This section will help you gain an overview to the history of Jews in Shanghai.

- A. Using a laptop, open the following page on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum webpage: <http://tinyurl.com/o68vsz6>
- B. Read the article titled "GERMAN AND AUSTRIAN JEWISH REFUGEES IN SHANGHAI." Take a few moments to discuss the reading with your group before completing the questions below.
1. In a few sentences, write a description of Shanghai before WWII. Look at the map provided through a link on the right hand side from 1933 to help you further understand Shanghai's location in China and the world. Be as specific as possible in your description and include an explanation of why Shanghai was such an international city.

2. Before Jewish people fleeing Nazi persecution went to Shanghai, there was a Jewish community established by two main groups who came before them. Use the reading to help you fill in the blanks below.

The first group was Sephardic Jews from _____ who came to China as _____ in the _____ .

The second group was Ashkenazi Jews who came to China as refugees fleeing the _____ . This group was _____ than the first group of Jewish people who established the community in Shanghai.

The early Jewish refugees of WWII leaving Europe came as _____ and settled in the area of the International Settlement known as the _____ .

3. Why did Shanghai become the choice of refuge for so many Jews escaping from Germany, Austria and other parts of Europe? Give at least two reasons found in the reading.

- _____

- _____

STATION #2: Life in Shanghai

As WWII progressed, refugees from Poland also fled Europe for safety. This time period also brought intensification of the war in China as Japan occupied the city of Shanghai and was fighting against the Chinese as well as the United States forces. Life was a struggle for all involved. This station details that time period and enables you to peer into life at this time.

- A. Using a laptop, open the following page on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum webpage: <http://tinyurl.com/34gtov6>
- B. Read the article titled, "POLISH JEWISH REFUGEES IN THE SHANGHAI GHETTO, 1941–1945" about the influx of a new group of refugees and life for this community in Shanghai as the war progressed. Click on the pictures at the side of the website and the artifacts to get a richer sense of this time and life for those who lived there.
- C. Watch the video, or part of it, found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RlbkfHFii8g>
Imagine the lifestyles and situations being described by those who lived through it.
1. In the space below reflect on what you read and saw in this section. Then [I think!] complete the sections below:

Two things that I learned from this are:

- _____

- _____

One thing that surprised me is:

- _____

One question I have is:

- _____

- D. Next, read the story from The Times of Israel titled, "Saved in Shanghai — A Young Girl's Story Highlights a Rare WWII Place of Refuge." After you have finished reading, draw a three-panel cartoon (with captions) detailing Nina Admoni's childhood in China.

