

Shropshire Holocaust Memorial Day 2022 resources
Mereside Academy KinderTransport imaginary letters home

Context

These letters were written by children from Mereside. They were then read out by them at the tree measuring ceremony held on Tuesday 25th January 2022. The children had been asked to think about these journeys as the “One Day” when everything changed for them and for their families.

Mr Mark Michaels from the South Shropshire Interfaith Forum, whose aunts came to England through the KinderTransport, said:

“The children's imagining - putting themselves in the place of the kindertransport children - was just amazing. Beautiful writing and read with belief and expression. If I'd discovered them in a folder in my mother's desk I would have believed them to be from my 'aunts'. Well done to the children and congratulations to their teachers who got them to the point where they could do that. Thank you.”

Shropshire Council Councillor Dr Rosemary Dartnall said:

“The children were remarkable, as others have said. Their imagined letters were very moving and showed a great understanding of the plight of children escaping the direct effects of the Holocaust. It was a lovely memorial full of hope.”

The children also read out a prayer that they had composed together.

The Prayer

Loving God, we come to you with heavy hearts, remembering the six million Jewish souls who lost their life during the Holocaust.

Through our learning of the Holocaust, we recognise the prejudice that was shown. We want to live without prejudice in our lives. Help guide us away from discrimination and towards equality.

In the light of God, we see everyone as equally precious and special.

Through our prayers and actions, help us to stand together with those who are suffering, so that light may banish all darkness, love will prevail over hate and good will triumph over evil.

Amen

The Letters

Letter One

To my dearest parents,

I am writing this because I am in distress about how you are in Germany, but I cannot describe the feeling about me leaving you – I felt gutted. I didn't wave bye to you, sorry my heart sank. I was trying so hard to hold back the tears, I miss you terribly.

If you are wondering how the journey went, it was fine but I was confused why everybody else was eager and upbeat, but most of them were older than me so they would understand more. It was very annoying and frustrating that I couldn't bring any precious items so I don't have anything to remember you by – I still feel devastated. I heard some ladies talking about Herr Hitler; that he was in it until the end. I feel so abandoned.

When we finally got past the border of Holland and when we got in the train station the people of Holland celebrated for us – maybe the world knows what's happening. Maybe there is hope. The older children were celebrating in delight and singing. No matter how much hope there is, I will still be so worried and shattered about you still being in Germany.

I just recently got to my new home but it's nothing like my old home back in Germany – no Jewish Torah – but they seem really nice and gave me a comfy bed. They don't speak German, so it is hard to understand them. But I had nice dinner, it was pasta.

I am missing you and I hope to see you soon. I will keep you updated with the letter, hope you're ok.

From your dearest son,
Arnold.

Letter Two

Dear Mama,

I am writing to you to inform you that I am safe in England. I miss you very, very much and my heart is sinking at what I've left behind. Tell Papa I'm alright. When I boarded the train, a 13 year-old girl sat next to me and Rose and she tightened her grip on my hand. The girls name was Color; she was quite nice.

Every hour we stopped for more passengers, as well as the German soldiers checking our bags. Luckily, they missed my bag or they would have found my copy of the Tanakh.

The views were breath taking, I wish you could have saw them! The windmills in Holland were really cool and the sea was like an endless expanse. I felt sick on the boat and most likely turned green! Rose was fine and looked at me with a smirk, as well as giggling at me. As we switched from boat to train, England came to sight...it's definitely different to home.

At the train platform, the English folk cheered and a spark of confidence flared. A young girl came to me and gave both me and Rose a wooden dog on a pull-along string. Although, I don't know much English, the English folk sounded happy for all of us and welcomed us with a smile.

Me and Rose are staying together while staying here, which I am glad about as she's the only piece of home I have left. We tucked in to the food we were given and I thought, are we staying here forever? Can you come here so we can live here together, as a family?

Before we met our new 'family' I thought what will they be like? As we approached the house I gaped at the huge fields in front of it. At the door, a tall man in overalls and a lady in blue overalls stood, their smiles a wild welcoming beam. To the side of them, a young 5 year-old girl stood, she wore a yellow hoodie and a green trouser as well as blue wellies. She had a daisy in her hair and a book in her hand. The man's name is Dan, the woman is Lily and the girl is Kaia.

Me and Rose are sharing a room, it has two beds (one each), toys for us, some clothes, and books. My favourite books are the picture books.

I hope to hear from you soon. Stay safe and well. I love you very much. Rose loves you too.

From your dearest daughter, Mei.

Letter Three

My dearest parents,

I write to you as I travel on the train. We've just been past the checkpoint out of Germany and I can already smell the freedom from the Nazis (luckily they didn't find my copy of the Torah).

I am sincerely missing you and I really wish this wasn't necessary however sadly it is. Although, please don't worry, I will take great care of Karl and Oskar as if I was their father. They seem so excited and I hope their excitement won't be trampled on when we finally arrive in England. I can't help but worry about where we are going and who we will live with until you join us.

As I sit here on the train, all of the other children are extremely noisy like they are on an exciting adventure, whilst I am grieving my losses, crying over what I have left behind. I'm devastated that we have had to leave you; I will miss mama's cooking and Papa tucking me in bed at night! (Also, please ignore my scruffy handwriting – the train is extremely bumpy although Holland is flat!)

The train is stopping now to refuel and then the food trolley will be coming round – I've heard its Kosher thankfully!

I will try to be brave and do my best!

I will write to you again soon!

From your dearest son,

Danny.

Letter Four

Dear Mama,

I'm devastated that we may have had our last goodbyes; my heart sank as you tried not to cry. I felt pain in my chest as my tears poured out like a waterfall.

As me and Oskar sat on the train, Oskar tried to put on a brave face and so did I so that Oskar wouldn't be afraid.

The other children on the train were so happy therefore they must not fully understand what is happening. It's extremely loud, it reminds me of how loud we were yesterday, cooking and baking in the kitchen one last time together! A happy memory that will keep me going on this long journey to England!

We have just arrived in Holland and everyone is waving at us on the platform! Oskar is so happy! I'll write to you again soon!

And I promise to be brave Mama!

Lots of love,

Claudia

[ends]

With thanks to all the children and staff of Mereside Church of England Academy, Shrewsbury, Shropshire