

Kurt Brodmann

Getting Facts Straight ... and Some Writing

1. How old was Kurt Brodmann when he was interviewed by Tanja Eckstein?
2. Look at the photo of Kurt Brodmann and his mother, Franzi.
 - a. How old was Kurt when the photo was taken?
 - b. How is this photo similar or different from family photos we take today?
3. List two ways in which events in Vienna and in Austria in 1938 directly affected the Brodmann family.
4. In this introductory excerpt, Kurt Brodmann tells us, "My mother then performed superhuman feats until my grandfather's death in January 1939..."



Can you imagine what one of these might have been?

5. "... My mother had received an exit permit for Shanghai..."
 - a. Where is Shanghai located? Which nation controlled Shanghai at this time?
 - b. Trace the likely route that Kurt's father and, later, his mother might have taken to get to Shanghai.
 - c. Despite having received an exit permit for Shanghai, Kurt's mother, Franzi, chose to stay behind in Vienna. Why?
6. Kurt tells us that his grandfather died in January 1939 and that his mother buried him in the same grave as Kurt's uncle, Artur, his mother's brother. Picture the day Kurt's mother stood at the gravesite of her father and her brother.
 - a. Imagine the thoughts she might have had, what words she might have gently spoken, what sorrows she might have felt as she stood there.
 - b. Write the thoughts she might have had if she stood there alone or the words of a eulogy she might have delivered with others present.
7. Kurt tells us that every day his mother, Franzi, went to the Jewish community and said, "My husband is in Shanghai, I have to go and join him."

Write the full conversation that you imagine took place between Kurt's mother and an official or officials in the Jewish Community Immigration Office.

For background and understanding, identify the following:

- Austro-Hungarian Empire
- Yiddish
- Anschluss
- Francis Joseph I (German: Franz Josef I, 1830-1916)
- Reichspogromnacht / Kristallnacht
- Kindertransport
- Kibbutz
- Haganah

Looking Further: Read the complete biography of Kurt Brodmann

<http://www.centropa.org/biography/kurt-brodmann>

To better understand the dramatic story of the Brodmann family, read the complete interview with Kurt Brodmann. Pairs or groups of students can each focus on two to three "chapters" in the story, sharing what you have learned with the entire class. Finally, using everyone's "contributions", put together the pieces of the puzzle that make up the story of the Brodmann Family.

For Thought:

- Both of Kurt Brodmann's parents were born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire whose emperor, Franz Joseph, reigned over for almost 70 years. What sort of influence – cultural, political, social,... - do you think the emperor, reigning for such a long period of time, may have had upon his subjects and citizens?
- List five different governments under which Kurt Brodmann lived.
- Look at the titles of the chapters in Kurt Brodmann's family story. Which ones are similar to yours? Which ones are different?
- Kurt's mother was born in Lviv, Galicia. Which nation ruled the region Galicia at the time? In which nation is the city located today? In which nation is Galicia located today?
- For students viewing the film with German narration: In the film, the city is called Lemberg, and the city has had several names and spellings. Why? What were the various names?
- Closely read the chapter "Escape" in Kurt's complete biography / interview. Kurt's parents, Franzi and Leopold, his brother, Harry, and he, himself, fled Austria for different places.
→Where did each of them go to escape the persecution of Austrian Jews? →Describe what life was like for them in their places of refuge.

Photographs Speak

<http://www.centropa.org/pictures-stories?type%5B%5D=photo&title=Brodmann&donor=88146#collapsed>

Using the link under the introductory excerpt to the Brodmann family's story, browse through the 12 photos available on the site. Choose one.

1. What do you see? When and where was the photo taken? Who is in the photo? Who might have taken the photo? Do these photos differ from photos we take nowadays? If so, in which ways?
2. Pretend you are one of the people in the photograph you chose. Write a personal diary entry telling about the day the photo was taken.

Viewing the Centropa film, KURT BRODMANN -- THE STORY OF THE BRODMANN FAMILY

<http://www.centropa.org/node/52714>

The four members of Kurt Brodmann's immediate family, his parents, Leopold and Franzi, his brother, Harry, and Kurt, himself all survived the war by fleeing Austria.

Life for the Brodmanns After the War

- When did Kurt Brodmann's parents return to Vienna?
- When did Kurt return to Vienna and from where did he come? Why did he return?
- What happened to Harry?
- After learning about what had happened to Jewish people during the war and Austrian Jews in particular, and after fleeing for their lives, why do you think his parents went back to live in Vienna?
 - a. What is your personal opinion about her decision?
 - b. Imagine you are Leopold and/or Franzi, and someone poses this question to you. What would you say?



Meeting Kurt Brodmann

1. If you could speak with Kurt Brodmann, work with a partner and brainstorm a list of five to eight questions you would want to ask him.
2. Re-read Kurt Brodmann's family story carefully. Given what you know about him and the questions you would have liked to ask him, answer the questions as you believe he might have answered them.
3. Why do you think Kurt has chosen to tell his stories to the world? What do you think he hopes that you and others will learn from such stories?
4. If you could share this story with others, as Kurt has done, with whom would you want to share it? Who would you want to hear it?
5. What particular elements of Kurt Brodmann's story or the story of his family do you find most interesting? Most memorable? Most touching?
6. What would you want people to learn from his story?
7. The world renowned author, recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, and Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel, once wrote in his book, *Souls on Fire*, "Listen attentively, and remember above all that true tales are meant to be transmitted – to keep them to oneself is to betray them."

Having read about Kurt Brodmann's family story and having viewed the Centropa film, in an essay or personal reflection, share your thoughts about Elie Wiesel's words here and how they might connect to Kurt sharing his own story with us.

Extending Your Knowledge

1938

Research

Kurt tells us that because he was Jewish, his ill grandfather was thrown out of his apartment, wasn't allowed to stay at a hotel, and wasn't allowed to sit on any public bench.

Conducting research, create a timeline showing at least three "creeping" restrictions and progressive loss of civil rights placed upon Jews in Austria after 1938. Discuss what each of these restrictions meant for the lives of individual Jewish people.

Writing

Pretend you are an Austrian Jewish person living in Vienna in 1938. Write a personal diary entry that begins with these opening words:

"Dear Diary,

Today, the new Nazi government took away our right to"

Kindertransport

Conduct research on the Kindertransport and read Harry Brodmann's story.

(<http://www.centropa.org/biography/kurt-brodmann>)

1. When did Harry leave Vienna and how old was he?
2. Where did he live when he arrived in England?
3. What did he do in his adult life?

Now that you have some background about his life and about the Kindertransport, write a page in Harry's diary the day he leaves Vienna, a second page during his journey to England, and a third page on his first day in his new home in England.

Map Activity

Draw a large map that traces the places the Brodmann family lived, to where they escaped, and where they finally settled. Label each place clearly and provide a key with brief explanatory notes for each place as well as the years each member lived there. Be sure that your map reflects changing borders and changing history. Historical maps are readily available on the Internet.

Looking at Lives

Compare the events and experiences of Kurt Brodmann's life with the life of another Jewish person from Austria presented on the Centropa website, <http://november1938.at/en>

Make a chart or table with three columns. In the first column on the left indicate a year or years. In the middle column, write Kurt Brodmann, and in the column on the right, the name of another Austrian Jewish person. The chart could look like this.

YEAR	Kurt Brodmann	(OTHER PERSON)

Reading the complete biographies for each person, choose years that had significant impact upon or were important milestones in their lives. Complete the chart describing events and experiences that occurred during the years you chose.

Share the information and draw contrast and comparisons.