## The Voyage of the *MS St. Louis*: The Refugees No Country Wanted

**Author**  
Mary McBride

**Grade Level**  
8

**Duration**  
3 class periods

### National Standards

**GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS**

**Element One:** The World in Spatial Terms  
How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information

**Essential Element:** Places and Regions  
6. How culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions

### AZ College and Career Ready Standards

**ELA**

**Reading Standards for 6-8 for Literacy in History/Social Studies**

**Reading**

**Key Ideas and Details**

6-8.RH.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

6-8.RH.2 Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; provide an accurate summary of the text distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

**Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

6-8.RH.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

**6-8 Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects**

**Writing**

**Production and Distribution of Writing**

6-8.WHST.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

a. Produce clear and coherent functional writing (e.g., formal letters, envelopes, procedures, labels, timelines, graphs/tables, experiments, maps, captions, charts, diagrams) in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate.

### Other Arizona Standards

**SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARD**

**Strand 2 World History**

**Concept 8:** World at War

PO 5. Describe how racism and intolerance contributed to the Holocaust.

**Strand 4 Geography**

**Concept 1:** The World in Spatial Terms

PO 3. Interpret maps, charts, and geographic databases using geographic information.

**Concept 4:** Human Systems

PO 1. Identify the push and pull factors (e.g., economic conditions, human rights conditions, famines, political strife/wars, natural disasters, changes in technology) that drive human migrations.

**TECHNOLOGY STANDARD**

**Concept 4:** Original Works

PO 1 Create innovative products or projects using digital tools to express original ideas.

PO 2. Use digital tools to collaborate with a group to communicate original ideas, products, or projects effectively in
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...a creative or innovative style.

## SIOP Elements

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## TESOL Standard(s)

**Through The Use Of ESL Methodologies, The Student Will:**

EFC-A. Create, read and interpret visual information relating to science, social studies and math.
- A5. Create visuals to present information.
EFC-B. Use math skills to calculate and measure.
- B1. Add and subtract numbers.
- B7. Calculate longitude, latitude, and distance.
EFC-C. Compose in a variety of forms.
- C1. Use Math, Social Studies, and Science target vocabulary.
- C2. Paraphrase written information.
EFC-D. Communicate clearly using math, science, and social studies target vocabulary.
- D2. Participate in small and large groups.

## Arizona English Language Proficiency Standards

**Stage IV**

**Basic**

**Reading**

**Standard 4:** The student will analyze text for expression, enjoyment, and response to other related content areas. The student will demonstrate knowledge of reading comprehension by:
- B-4: answering who, what, where, when, why, which and how questions about text.
- B-6: retelling a literary selection by sequencing events using transition words.
- B-7: connecting information and events in text to life experiences and to related text and sources (text-to-self, text-to-text).
- B-8: summarizing the main idea and supporting details from text.
- B-21: applying understanding of content area vocabulary within math, science and social studies texts.
- B-28: interpreting information in functional documents (e.g., maps, schedules, letters, graphic organizers) for a specific purpose.
Overview

Who is responsible for the lives of our fellow humans? This essential question transcends all time but has great application when looking at World War II.

Purpose

In this lesson, students will read primary and secondary sources, calculate distance, and locate places on a map to discover the history of MS St. Louis, a ship of Jewish refugee passengers that no country would accept. This lesson is designed to make students aware of an extraordinary event in history that has relevant connections today. This lesson includes strategies for teaching diverse learners.

Key Vocabulary

- **Kristallnacht**: Night of the Broken Glass, a pogrom against (persecution of) German Jews that occurred on November 9-10, 1938
- **Nazi**: a member of the National Socialist German Workers Party, which controlled Germany from 1933-1945 under Adolf Hitler and advocated totalitarian government
- **upstander**: someone who stands up against a person, idea or event that is not humane
- **bystander**: someone who watches an event that is unfair and does nothing to stop the problem
- **refugee**: a person who flees for refuge or safety, especially to a foreign country, as in time of political upheaval, war, or economic turmoil
- **MS St. Louis**: ship with 937 Jewish refugees which was refused by Cuba, the US, and Canada

Materials

- Social studies notebooks (journals)
- Access to electronic versions or printed copies of these articles:
  1. SS St Louis: The ship of Jewish refugees nobody wanted
  2. Seeking Refuge in Cuba, 1939
  3. The Voyage of the St. Louis (Chapter 7 of Holocaust and Human Behavior)
  4. Voyage of the SS St. Louis: Journey toward a better future
     https://www.thestar.com/opinion/2008/05/27/voyage_of_the_ss_st_louis_journey_toward_a_better_future.html
  5. No Turning Back
- The St. Louis Refugee Ship Blues
- World Map
  http://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/World-at.pdf
- Sol Messenger video (6.5 minutes long)
  https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/video/turned-away-ms-st-louis
- Voyage of the St. Louis—Animated Map (3 minutes)
- Rulers
- News magazines (optional)
- I Am poem (optional)
- Venn Diagram
- Computer lab or computer access
- Who is a Refugee Essay Scoring Guide
- Possible Image for Session One
- Vocabulary Cards
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- Vocabulary test
- Upstander video (optional) (2.5 minutes long) https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/video/who-upstander

Objectives

The student will be able to:
- identify main ideas from primary or secondary sources
- write a summary
- locate places on a map
- measure distances on a map
- use technology to create a product
- identify push and pull factors
- describe how intolerance or racism leads to being a refugee

Procedures

Prerequisite Knowledge: Students should have been introduced to the Holocaust and World War II.

Teacher Note to explain why the ship is called both MS and SS St. Louis: Built by the Bremer Vulkan shipyards for the Hamburg America Line, the St. Louis was a diesel-powered ship and properly referred to with the prefix "MS" or "MV", but she is often known as the "SS St. Louis". The ship was named after the city of St. Louis, Missouri. Her sistership was the Milwaukee. The St. Louis regularly sailed the trans-Atlantic route from Hamburg to Halifax, Nova Scotia and New York and made cruises to the Canary Islands, Madeira and Morocco. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MS_St._Louis

Prior to the Lesson: Students will answer the following questions in their social studies notebooks.
1. What would they do with $300? Include on whom, on what, when, where and why they would spend the $300 on this purchase.
2. List all the most important people in their lives, like their mom, dad, siblings, other relatives or friends. They can list up to twenty people. (Application: Promotes engagement, Preparation: Linking to background)

SESSION ONE

Engage:
1. Write this essential question on the board: "What can we learn about history and ourselves by our researching, reading, discussing, and writing about an event?"

SESSION TWO

Explore:
1. Introduce the vocabulary words. If a clarification for "upstander" is needed, show the video found at: https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/video/who-upstander
3. Have students write out a reflection of their feelings.
4. Close the day with having two or three students share their reflections. (Integrating Processes: Writing, Listening, Reading, Speaking)
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Elaborate:
1. Explain push factors (those that drive you out) and pull factors (those that keep you in the same place). Have students write in their social studies notebooks, three factors that were push factors for the German Jews and three factors that were pull factors for the German Jews based on what they know from studying the Holocaust and from the presentations about the St. Louis. Have students share their responses. Record the responses in two categories (Push/Pull) on the board. Have students add ideas not already recorded in their social studies notebooks to their original thoughts. (Application: Linked to Objectives, Scaffolding: Comprehensible input)

2. Project the video of the ship and its journey found at: https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?ModuleId=10005267&MediaId=3544

3. Distribute World Maps and play the video again. Have students identify the stops the ship made by marking the locations on their maps.

4. Have students use the scale to measure the distance that the ship covered before the refugees disembarked. (Application: Hands on)

5. Conclude the class by projecting the The St. Louis Refugee Ship Blues found at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/opinions/outlook/st-louis-refugee-ship-blues/static.html Have students discuss what the symbols are in the image and what is/are the image’s message(s). (Grouping Option: Whole class)

SESSION THREE

Evaluate:
Option 1: Explain that each student will be using information in their social studies notebooks and additional resources to create an electronic version of an essay reflecting on what they have learned and felt about refugees. Share the Refugee Reflection Scoring Guide. Using the computer lab or their devices, have students find an image of a refugee. They will then reflect on who they know/think about this person and how it makes them feel. (Assessment: Individual, Written)

Assessment
Students will score:
- 80% or higher on the Vocabulary Test for a social studies or language grade.
- 48 points or higher on the Who is a Refugee Essay Scoring Guide or 36 points or higher on the Refugee Reflection Scoring Guide for a language and social studies grade.
- Travel costs and map distance problems can be graded for correctness for a math grade.

Extensions
Students can complete the I AM poem to gain more empathy for what it must be like to be a refugee.

Sources
SS St Louis: The ship of Jewish refugees nobody wanted

Seeking Refuge in Cuba, 1939

The Voyage of the St. Louis (Chapter 7 of Holocaust and Human Behavior)

Voyage of the SS St. Louis: Journey toward a better future
https://www.thestar.com/opinion/2008/05/27/voyage_of_the_ss_st_louis_journey_toward_a_better_future.html

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