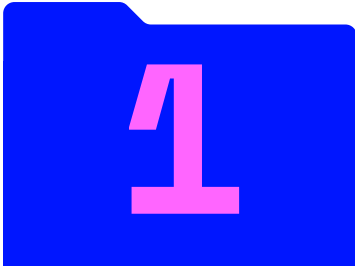


LESSON



THE FACES BEHIND THE INSTITUTE

In this lesson, participants will dive into researching and contextualising the lives of people who worked and studied at the Institute.



LESSON 1 – OVERVIEW

LEARNING GOALS

Research life stories

↗ Conduct self-guided research to deepen knowledge about the people affiliated with the Institute

Place individual lives in different contexts

↗ Integrate biographical facts into the broader historical context of their time

Strengthen research skills

↗ Use digital resources to gather information

METHODS AND PROCESS

1. Research and analysis

↗ The participants select a person and research that person's life.

To do so, they should primarily use the information provided in the “Reading Room”. For more in-depth investigations, they can also follow the instructions in the exhibition's “Toolkit” on how to conduct self-guided online research.

2. Group presentation and discussion

↗ In the next stage, pupils present the person they have researched to the full group. During the presentations, everyone reflects together on how the historical conditions of the specific era shaped the person and how the events of their life are related to contemporary historical developments.

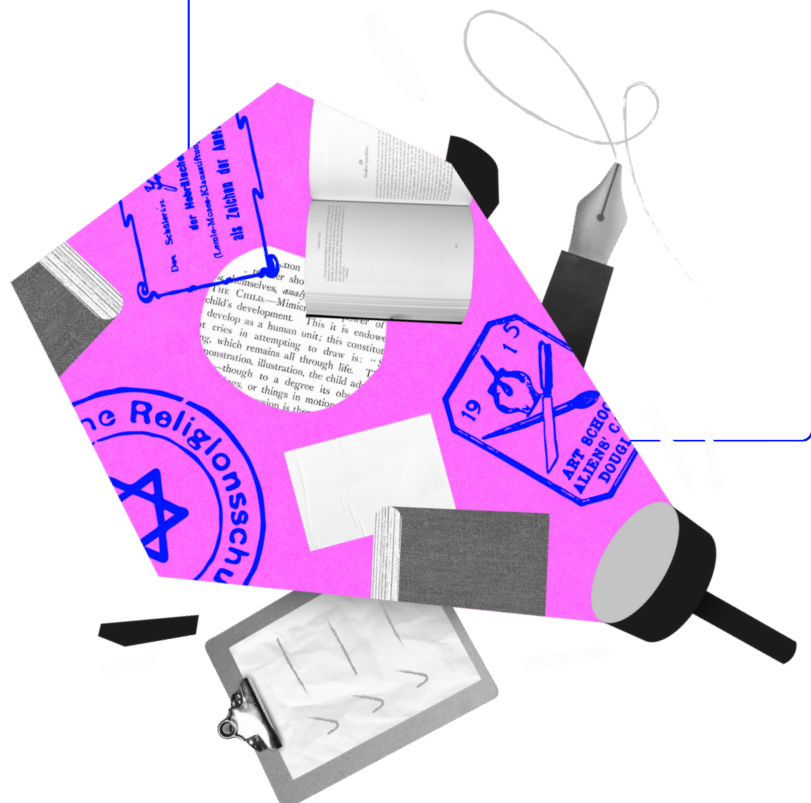
MATERIALS TO USE

MOBILE DEVICES FOR RESEARCH:

The pupils will need smartphones or tablets to conduct research.

WORKSHEET FOR PUPILS:

Scroll down for a worksheet for the pupils.



LESSON 1 – INTRO

EXPLANATIONS AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In this lesson, participants will dive into researching and contextualising the lives of key figures from the Institute. We advise visiting the online exhibition for the general background before starting this activity.

The figures on the list lived in different time periods and experienced the Institute from a diversity of perspectives. Together, they paint a multifaceted picture of their era. The mission is to choose one of these figures and research the key events in that person's life. Our online "Toolkit" offers useful advice and resources for conducting self-guided biographical research. Additionally, selected biographies are included in our "Online Reading Room". Depending on the group's skill level, it might make sense to select figures who are not featured in the Reading Room (Max Wiener, Hermann Cohen).

The options are:

REGINA JONAS (1902–1944)

was the first woman to be ordained as a rabbi in Germany. She studied at the Higher Institute for Jewish Studies in Berlin, where in 1930, she wrote her thesis titled "Can a Woman Become a Rabbi?". Despite reservations from some of her male colleagues, she was ordained as a rabbi in 1935. During the Second World War, she was persecuted by the Nazis and ultimately murdered at Auschwitz.

ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL (1907–1972)

was a Jewish theologian and philosopher. Born in Poland, he attended universities in Berlin and Warsaw. In Germany, he continued his studies at the Higher Institute for Jewish Studies, where he deeply engaged with Jewish mysticism and ethics. The Institute played a central role in his intellectual development, laying the foundations for his later work, which emphasised the importance of religious experience and individuals' responsibility in society. Heschel emigrated to the United States in 1938, where he taught and wrote until his death.

ISMAR ELBOGEN (1874-1943)

was a Jewish scholar and historian particularly known for his scholarship on the history of Jewish prayer and liturgy. His most important work, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, is still considered a definitive reference in the field. Elbogen was also affiliated with the Higher Institute for Jewish Studies in Berlin, where he served as a professor, and both taught and researched various aspects of Jewish history, religion and culture. He fled to the USA in 1938, where he died in 1943.

LESSON 1 – INTRO

EXPLANATIONS AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

LEO BAECK (1873-1956)

was a rabbi and the most prominent representative of German Liberal (also known as Reform) Judaism of his time. He studied at the Higher Institute for Jewish Studies in Berlin and graduated in 1895. Later, he returned to the Institute as a lecturer (Dozent), a position he held from 1912 until its closure by the Nazis in 1942. In addition to his academic career, Baeck served as a chaplain during the First World War, from 1914 to 1918, providing pastoral care to Jewish soldiers and conducting religious ceremonies. Despite the Nazi regime's increasing persecution of Jews, Baeck remained in Germany to support the Jewish community. He was deported to the Theresienstadt Ghetto in 1943 but survived. After liberation, he emigrated to England, where he died in 1956.

HANNAH ARENDT (1906-1975)

was a Jewish philosopher and political theorist whose works extensively grappled with themes of power, authority, totalitarianism and the nature of evil. She had a special connection to the Higher Institute for Jewish Studies in Berlin, as she organised the recovery of stolen books on behalf of the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction. This organisation aimed to return Jewish cultural property that had been looted during the Holocaust to the Jewish community.

Arendt's devoted efforts helped recover numerous books and cultural items and return this property to its rightful owners or their heirs. However, this was not possible for the Institute, which had no legal successor. The Institute is therefore one of the cases in which books designated as "heirless" were transferred to other educational and cultural institutions.

HERMANN COHEN (1842-1918)

was a German Jewish philosopher. From 1912 until his death in 1918, he taught Jewish philosophy of religion at the Higher Institute for Jewish Studies. This was a significant step for the institute, as Cohen was already a respected philosopher before his appointment. His teaching there exemplified the institution's open-mindedness and interdisciplinary approach. Cohen was especially known for his efforts to combine the Jewish religion with the philosophy of Immanuel Kant: consistent with the principles of Kantian philosophy, he saw Judaism as a religion of reason and ethics.

MAX WIENER (1891-1950)

was a Jewish scholar and professor at the Higher Institute for Jewish Studies in Berlin. His research focused mainly on Jewish history and culture, and he authored numerous important books on these themes. Wiener was also a dedicated educator, committed to promoting Jewish education and preserving Jewish cultural heritage. Like Leo Baeck, he served as a chaplain rabbi during the First World War, supporting Jewish soldiers at the front.

LESSON 1 – WORKSHEET

THE FACES BEHIND THE INSTITUTE

↗ **Research a historical figure:**

Either use the online exhibition's "Reading Room" or conduct your own research. If you want to conduct your own research, have a look at our "Toolkit", where you will find tips for searching

↗ **Create a biographical profile:**

Use the information you have gathered to put together a biographical profile of your chosen historical figure. Our outline will help you to identify the most important information.

↗ **Present your results:**

Present the historical person as a group using the biographical profile.

↗ **Outline for your biographical profile:**

- Person's name
- Dates of birth and death
- Key life events
- Children and family
- Education
- Career path
- Important life events
- Significant publications/achievements
- Interesting facts or anecdote

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR INVESTIGATING THE PERSON'S BIOGRAPHY:

- What impact did the political and social circumstances during the person's life have on their life story?
- To what extent are historical events and developments from the period reflected in the person's life story?
- Why have you chosen this person?

MATERIAL



Link to virtual exhibition



Link to Reading Room



Link to Toolkit