

A letter, one day, and what the record will not say

A print-ready 45- or 90-minute source packet for grades 9–12 and undergraduate classrooms

CORE RULE

Keep the document, testimony and inference distinct. Students may name what a source records, what it does not record and what questions remain. They should not invent a missing ending.

Inside

- A teachable 45-minute core route and a 90-minute extension.
- Five source cards: a family letter, a forced-sale deed, a deportee list, a shop hanger and a family photograph.
- Discussion prompts that do not require personal disclosure or a single emotional response.
- Object-level citations, credit lines and rights boundaries.

This packet is an access tool, not an institutional endorsement, a complete Holocaust curriculum or a license to reproduce every image. Follow each object page for current evidence and rights notes.

Current online path · <https://www.reichenbacharchive.org/for-teachers>

Prepare the room before opening the records

The lesson works best when students are told in advance that the archive is descendant-led, incomplete and explicit about uncertainty. The objective is disciplined reading, not a performance of grief.

Learning goals

- Distinguish what a document directly records from family testimony and later interpretation.
- Use an object ID, title, date, source and rights line to make a traceable claim.
- Identify an evidentiary limit without treating absence as proof.
- Compare how a private letter, bureaucratic record, commercial object and family photograph produce different kinds of knowledge.

Before class

- Open or print Source Cards 1–5. If using screens, test the permanent object pages.
- Tell students that German is the letter's source language and Rabbi Dr. Esther Jilovsky's English is the credited translation. No Hebrew translation of the letter currently exists.
- Use content care appropriate to the class: the records address antisemitic persecution, forced sale and deportation.

Do not assign

- Do not ask students to decide Martha Reichenbach's place of death; cited records conflict.
- Do not ask them to name a camp or later fate for Kurt Reichenbach, Paula Wollenberg or Hans Wollenberg. The family assembled for deportation on 12 April 1942; the transport reached Warsaw on 16 April. No surviving record yet found traces their individual fates after that arrival.
- Do not turn living descendants, current American addresses or private family information into a research exercise.

PRIVATE OPTION

Any personal reflection may remain private. A student can instead write about a source feature—handwriting, a legal clause, a repeated address or a maker's mark—without disclosing family experience.

One letter, one day, one object

0–5 · Establish the rule

Read the Core rule on page 1. Ask: What is the difference between saying “the source records” and saying “we know”? Collect two examples without resolving them yet.

5–20 · Source Card 1: the letter

Read a short passage from the German and Jilovsky English. Students mark one phrase that addresses Margarete directly and one practical detail about leaving. Ask what a private letter can show that a later summary cannot.

20–30 · Source Card 3: one documented day

Locate Kurt Reichenbach, Paula Wollenberg and Hans Wollenberg. List only the fields the page supplies: names, addresses and birth dates in a deportee-list context. Then write one sentence beginning: “This page does not tell us ...”

30–40 · Choose one object

Pairs choose Source Card 2, 4 or 5. They complete three statements: (1) I can see/read ... (2) the record identifies this as ... (3) I cannot establish ...

40–45 · Exit evidence

Write a two-sentence caption for the chosen object. Sentence one must make a supported claim. Sentence two must preserve one limit or uncertainty. Add the object ID.

SUCCESS CHECK

A strong response is traceable and modest. It names the source, makes no claim past the evidence and leaves uncertainty visible. Emotional intensity is not a grading criterion.

FLEX if time is short

- Use only the letter and one object; keep the final evidence sentence.
- Allow pairs to annotate silently before whole-class discussion.
- Replace spoken sharing with a private index card or digital submission.

Compare the kinds of evidence

0–10 • Method and context

Introduce the archive as descendant-led and public-facing. Read the Core rule and the object-level terms: source, status, uncertainty, credit and rights.

10–30 • Letter in close reading

Use Source Card 1 and the online letter reader. Compare a small German passage with Jilovsky's English. Identify voice, audience, date and one constraint shaping what Dolf can say.

30–48 • Coercion in a legal record

Use Source Card 2. Ask how Clause 7 makes persecution visible in administrative language. Students should not generalize beyond the displayed clause without another source.

48–63 • Names in a deportee list

Use Source Card 3. Make a field inventory, then separate documented data from inferred chronology. Stop where the record stops.

63–78 • Material survival

Half the class reads Source Card 4; half reads Source Card 5. Each group identifies what physical survival adds and what it still cannot prove.

78–87 • Comparison matrix

Complete the worksheet on page 10. Compare purpose, creator, audience, direct evidence and limit. No row should be left with only a feeling word.

87–90 • Closing

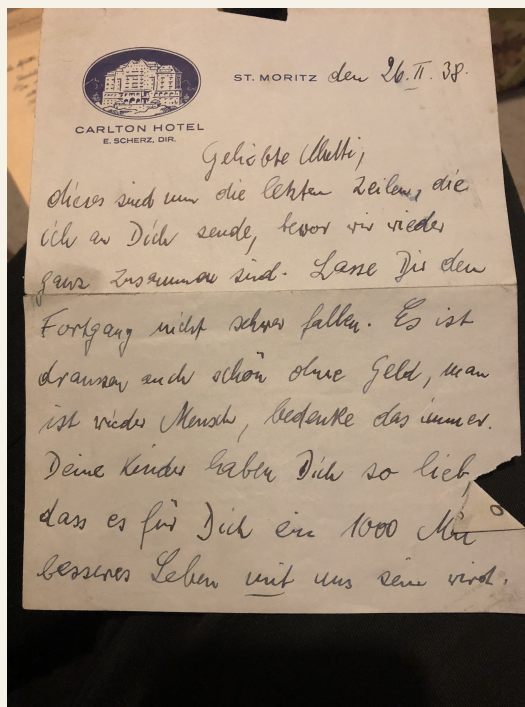
Complete: "The most responsible claim I can make is ... because source ... records One question that remains is"
Students may submit privately.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION

Open the Complete Catalog and locate one additional record by series. Explain why it belongs with correspondence, photographs, commerce, civil/property records, persecution/memorial records, family objects, media, interpretations or research.

Dolf Reichenbach to his mother Margarete

St. Moritz · 26 November 1938



Direct photograph of the first surviving handwritten sheet. German is the source language; the complete online reader pairs it with Rabbi Dr. Esther Jilovsky's English translation.

OBSERVE

Choose one phrase addressed to Mutti and one practical detail about leaving. How do voice and audience shape this source?

BOUNDARY

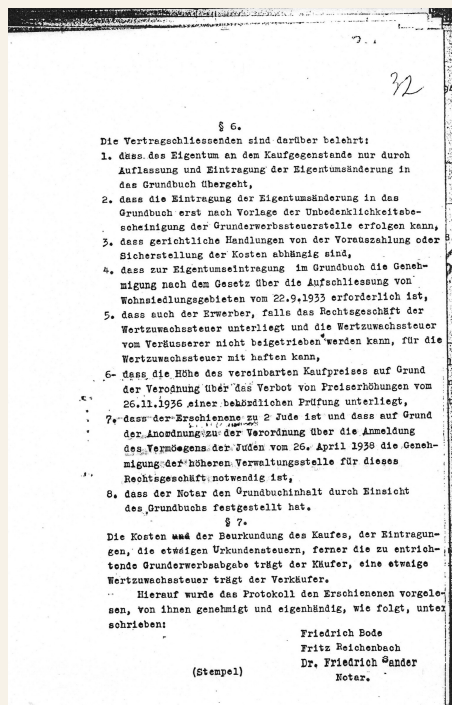
The letter records Dolf's words on this date. It does not by itself establish what Margarete did next or supply the history of every family member.

Object page · <https://www.reichenbacharchive.org/objects/doc-letter-1938>

Suggested citation · Reichenbach Family Archive, DOC-LETTER-1938, "Letter from St. Moritz," 26 November 1938; German source, English translation by Rabbi Dr. Esther Jilovsky.

Forced-sale deed — racial-law clause

Wernigerode · 26 August 1938



Third page of Urkundenrolle Nr. 79/1938 for Breite Straße 7. Clause 7 identifies vendor Fritz Reichenbach as Jewish and invokes the April 1938 property-registration regulation.

OBSERVE

Find the clause or its object-page transcription. Which words make racial coercion part of the legal transaction?

BOUNDARY

The clause directly records the legal classification and approval requirement. The displayed page is not a complete account of Fritz's life, the entire sale process or the property's later history.

Object page · <https://www.reichenbacharchive.org/objects/rb-scan-007>

Suggested citation · Reichenbach Family Archive, RB-SCAN-007, "Forced-sale deed — racial-law clause," 26 August 1938; accessioned historical scan.

[illegible]

7

J. Reichenbach coat hanger

Halberstadt · date not established



Family-held wooden hanger marked "J. Reichenbach, Herren- u. Knaben-Moden, Halberstadt." The commercial name survived on an object that could leave the shop.

OBSERVE

List the information carried by the mark. What does the object communicate without a sentence or date?

BOUNDARY

The hanger documents a surviving branded object. It does not establish when it was made, who used it or exactly how it left Germany.

Object page · <https://www.reichenbacharchive.org/objects/rb-pho-0227>

Suggested citation · Reichenbach Family Archive, RB-PHO-0227, "J. Reichenbach coat hanger," date not established.

Dolf, Margarete and Paul Reichenbach

Before November 1935



Direct flatbed scan of a family-held photograph. The sitters are identified through family testimony as Dolf, Margarete and Paul Reichenbach.

OBSERVE

Describe only what is visible before reading the identification. Then add the names and ask which claim comes from the image and which comes from testimony.

BOUNDARY

The photograph shows a posed moment and the archive records the family identification. It does not reveal private thought, the photographer, the exact place or a complete family history.

Object page · <https://www.reichenbacharchive.org/objects/rb-pho-0183>

Suggested citation · Reichenbach Family Archive, RB-PHO-0183 / preferred source RB-SCAN-037, "The Reichenbach family," before November 1935.

What can each source carry?

Complete at least three rows. Use nouns and evidence verbs—records, names, depicts, states, corroborates—before interpretation words.

Source	Purpose / creator	Direct evidence	Limit or uncertainty
1 · Letter			
2 · Deed			
3 · List			
4 · Hanger			
5 · Photograph			

Build one responsible claim

The most responsible claim I can make is ...

because source ... records ...

One question that remains is ...

This page may be submitted privately. A student may write only about the source and need not connect it to personal or family experience.

Keep the source with the sentence

Minimum citation elements

- 1 Archive name; object title; object ID; date if established; permanent object-page URL.
- 2 Add the named repository and credit line when the object page identifies an outside holder.
- 3 For the 1938 letter, credit Rabbi Dr. Esther Jilovsky for the English translation.

Access is not ownership

Each object page controls its own credit and rights language. A downloadable web image may be a crop, resized copy, photographed sheet, access scan or disclosed interpretation. It is not automatically the preservation master, and its presence here is not a blanket reuse license.

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