

Passage to Freedom

ABOUT THE STORY

In 1940 Hiroki Sugihara's father was the Japanese consul to Lithuania. As the Nazi's approached, Jews flooded the consulate asking for help leaving the country. Against orders, Hiroki's father issued thousands of visas, allowing the Jews to escape and saving many hundreds of lives. His courage – and the courage of his family, who supported his actions – lives on in this book.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ken Mochizuki interviewed Hiroki Sugihara to learn about his father's actions and his own memories of that dangerous time in Lithuania. Those interviews became the book *Passage to Freedom*, which has won a Parent's Choice Award, been named an ALA Notable Children's Book, and received many other awards and honors. He is also the author of *Heroes* and *Baseball Saved Us*.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Dom Lee was born in Seoul, South Korea, and lives in New Jersey with his wife and two children. He has also illustrated *Heroes* and *Baseball Saved Us*.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children for suggestions about the qualities a hero should have. Write their ideas on the chalkboard. Tell them that the story they will read is about a hero during World War II. Give children some background about the war. Explain that during World War II, the Nazi's, Germans who believed they were superior to all other people, tried to imprison and kill people who were different from them.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- "Why did Hiroki and his family live in Lithuania?"
- "Why were people all around Hiroki's house?"
- "What did Hiroki's father decide to do?"
- "Why was the decision difficult to make?"
- "Why do you think Hiroki's father made the decision he did?"

(Draw conclusions)

- "Do you think Hiroki's father was heroic?" Explain." (Analyze)

Vocabulary

Write these words and their definitions on the chalkboard. Ask children to match each word with its definition. Then ask them to use each word in the sentence.

diplomat	written name
refugees	written permission to travel through a country
visa	people escaping from their home country
signature	person representing a government in another country

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Social Studies: World War II Time Line

Have children work in groups to create a time line of World War II. Each group can write events from a specific year on the time line. When the time line is complete, hang it in the classroom.

Language Arts: What Is a Hero?

Ask children to write a paragraph explaining what they think makes a hero. Encourage them to think carefully about what qualities a hero should have and to name one or two people they think are heroic. Volunteers can read their explanations aloud to the class.

Social Studies: Hanukkah Celebration

Hiroki Sugihara's first experience with Jewish life was at a Hanukkah celebration. Ask children to look in books and encyclopedias for information about Hanukkah and how it is celebrated.

Geography: Refugee Travel

The Jews that Hiroki's father helped hoped to travel east through the Soviet Union to Japan and then onward to freedom. Show children a map of the world in 1940. Starting in Lithuania, trace the route the refugees would have had to take to get to freedom. If possible, have children make their own maps of the path to freedom.

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

Author/Illustrator Interviews

Using the keywords *Ken Mochizuki* and *Dom Lee*, children can find interviews with the book's author and illustrator. Have them find out more about how the *Passage to Freedom* was written and illustrated by reading these interviews online.