

Artifact Observation

Take a closer look at the object below.

Answer questions in Section III of your worksheet. Be sure to answer the worksheet questions before moving on to the second page of this document.



Artifact Description and Story

John Glass' Toy Dog

From the museum's archival collection, this beloved toy dog belonged to John Glass, and was one of the few items the 3-year-old could bring with him as he and his family were forced to escape Nazi Germany in 1939.

Toys are symbolic of childhood and play. When we play with toys as children, we develop various skills that help us to understand the world around us, but they are more than just learning tools. A childhood toy is often a symbol of security and provides comfort as we grow and change. Toys become part of the memories we make early in life and even beyond. This stuffed dog that belonged to John Glass was more than a toy, it was a source of great comfort and security to a three-year-old boy who was facing the frightening reality of having to leave his home in Germany for a place he had never been before. The toy is symbolic of the small number of possessions his family were allowed to bring with them as they made their way to the U.S. and is part of his childhood story that future generations can learn from through this object.

John Glass was born in Berlin in 1936 to parents Paul and Anni Glass, a prominent German Jewish family. Both John's grandfathers served in the German army during World War I, and his father was a well-respected electrical engineer. After coming to power in 1933, the Nazis began creating laws that limited German Jews' lives and were intended to dehumanize them. Kids couldn't go to school or play in the park and families were stripped of their citizenship. In 1938, John's father, Paul, was fired from his job because he was Jewish. John's family lost many of their freedoms and their way of life changed dramatically as a result of Nazi biased laws. This is an example of the prejudice that Jews faced during the Holocaust.

Consider the following questions:

1. Why do you think this toy was so important to John? Why do you think he kept it? Why do you think he donated it to the Museum?
2. Why do you think people are cruel or unkind to others?
3. What does it mean when someone loses their citizenship? Loses a job? Is excluded from society? How do you think it makes a person feel?
4. What happens or changes that can lead people to make biased judgments about others?
5. How can we prevent making biased judgments about others?

With the increase of violence and open prejudice against Jews, the Glass family escaped Nazi Germany and arrived in the U.S. in 1940. John grew up to be a sociologist and political activist in Los Angeles and eventually donated this dog to the Museum's collection as a way to educate those on what he faced and depict the small comforts children found during times of struggle and violence.