

DISCOVERY FILM FESTIVAL

Scotland's International Film Festival
for Young Audiences



Teachers' Resource Pack: **The Secret Floor**

First and Second Level Learners | Created by Lindsey Law

Discovery Film Festival | Mon 2 – Wed 18 November 2026

DCA

Dundee Contemporary Arts

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ONE CITY, MANY DISCOVERIES

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Introduction

Discovery Learning Resources give you exciting classroom activities to enhance Curriculum for Excellence delivery.

They are created by classroom teachers and education professionals.

Each resource aims to:

- support and extend working with film in the classroom
- help prepare teachers for a class visit to a Discovery Film Festival film and to extend the impact of that visit for delivery of CfE
- develop confidence in Moving Image Education approaches and working with 21st Century Literacy/moving image texts

Each resource is free and available to download from:

<https://www.dca.org.uk/discovery-film-festival-resources/>

The Secret Floor (Das geheime Stockwerk)

Dir: Norbert Lechner

Germany, Austria, Luxembourg, 2025 / 1h13m



The Secret Floor

Synopsis:

Karli (12) moves to the Alps, where his parents fulfil their dream of owning a hotel. Instead of vacation, Karli grudgingly helps his parents scrape off old wallpaper. Then he discovers that he can travel through time with the old elevator – to the year 1938! There, Karli befriends the lively Jewish girl Hannah and the shoe shiner Georg. In the present, Karli gradually confronts the shadow of National Socialism that looms over the world of his new friends.

When Georg is wrongfully accused and arrested for theft, Hannah and Karli want to find the real criminal. They discover during their investigations that strange things are happening in the hotel. The three friends want to solve the mystery together and embark on an exciting journey, during which they discover that a great secret lies behind the hotel facade

Advisory note:

There are a number of expletives used including 'shit' 'shitty', 'arsehole' 'crap'. There is a reference to homosexual being used in a derogatory way. Given the subject matter which deals with the increasing and more overt threat to Jewish people just prior to the Second World War this can be an unsettling film for learners as it is quite a challenging topic. As the film progresses there is a feeling of mild underlying threat. At times it can feel a little ominous. There are a number of negative statements with reference to Jews. Towards the end of the film Karli becomes aware of the immense danger his new friends may be in. He tries, but fails, to get back to warn them. He is quite distraught in this scene. There is a satisfactory resolution at the end of the film.

Teacher's notes:

Age and stage recommendations, including CfE objectives:

The film is suitable for ages 7 and above. This pack is aimed at First and Second Level learners. This film is recommended for Primary 3–5. The following CfE Experiences and Outcomes are covered in this pack:

Literacy: **LIT: I-02a/2-02a, LIT 1-04a/2-04a, LIT 1-05a/2-05a, LIT1-06a/2-05a, LIT 1-07a/2-07a, LIT1-25a, LIT 1-26a/2-26a, LIT 2-28a, LIT 1-29a/2-29a.**

Health and Wellbeing: **HWB 1.09a/2.09a, HWB 1-11a/2-11a, HWB 1-13a/2-13a, HWB 1-44a/2-44a. HWB 1-44a, HWB 1-44b/2-44b, HWB 1-45/2-45b.**

HWB: **1-44a/ 2-44a. HWB 1-44a, HWB 1-44b/2-44b, HWB 1-45/2-45b.**

Social Studies: **SOC 1-01a/2-02a, SOC1-04a/2-04a, SOC 1-06a/2-06a SOC1-17a/ 2-17a.**

Technologies: **TCH 1-02a/2-02a**

Art and Design: **EXA 1-02a/2-02a, EXA 1-03a/2-03a.**

Teacher quote:

The film is in German with English subtitles. This is a remarkably accessible film about the prelude to the outbreak of World War 2. It takes place almost exclusively within the hotel itself. This enables a direct comparison between the two periods in which the film is set. It is peopled by a range of characters who add to the richness of each period. It is told through the perspective of the younger characters themselves. This makes it eminently meaningful and engaging for its young audience.

It lends itself to a wide range of topics beyond the film itself which is the looming shadow of war.

It also gives learners opportunities to apply the skills embedded in Screen Scotland's Film and Screen Curriculum which is currently being developed





Before watching the film:

Activity 1A: **Listening to the Trailer (Literacy)**

Sound is one of the Ten Elements in Screen Scotland's Film and Screen Curriculum.

In order to see how much information can be gleaned from the soundtrack alone the learners are invited to listen to the trailer and note down any sounds and words they may hear:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Rxbnbp5Fw>

As this is in German it will be necessary to go by the tone and sound alone for this activity. Discussion and suggestions are then made. This can be using iPads or A3 paper. All ideas should be recorded.

It may then be helpful to replay parts of the trailer several times.

Activity 1B: **Discussion. (Literacy)**

The class is now to view the film trailer in full. Discussion and suggestions are then made. This can be using iPads or A3 paper. All ideas should be recorded.

View trailer and, using questions as prompts, make suggestions about the purpose of the film. It may then be helpful to replay parts of the trailer several times.

- Where do you think the film is set?
- When is the film set in the opening scenes? These are described as establishing shots to give period and location.
- Karli, the principal character, and his mother find an advertisement about the hotel. What is surprising about some of the rooms?
- Karli is sent on an errand and uses the lift. It seems unreliable at first.

What does he do when he thinks he is trapped in the lift?

- What does Karli see when lift doors open?
- Karli walks through a door and into a corridor. What does he see?
- There is a shoe shine boy who wonders if he should clean Karli's shoes. Could he?
- The girl Karli meets suggests that he may be from a circus. Why?
- Where does Karli say he is from?
- The shoe shine boy is accused of theft. Does the police inspector's uniform remind you of other uniforms of the time?

At the end of **Activity 2** compare these answers with those for **Activity 1**.

Identify and discuss how close or otherwise the initial suggestions were. Note how sound contributes to the overall tone and feeling of a film.

Activity 2: **The Secret Floor. (Literacy)**

This can either be done as a whole class or small group activity. If the latter, then contributions should be given by each group.

- Answer the following statements and questions after discussion about each.
- What does Karli do which shows he cannot get a phone signal in the hotel?
- What are Karli and his family doing in the hotel?
- Karli's mother promises they will have Wi Fi and Internet when who comes to the hotel?
- What does Karli do when the lift doesn't seem to work at first?
- Why is he puzzled when the lift doors finally open? What does he see?
- Karli was still in the hotel but in what year? How was he able to establish what year it was?
- What kind of flags were on small stands throughout the hotel?
- What was the boy doing sitting in the hotel lobby?
- The girl thinks Karli is from the circus. Where does he say he is from?
- Why does Karli change how he is dressed?
- Hannah sets a trap to catch the real thief. What did she do?
- Who was the main suspect for the thefts? What was he really doing?
- When Karli's mother asks about his friends, does he tell her everything?
- How did Hannah trick Herman and lead to his family having to leave the hotel?
- What was the real secret about what was happening in the hotel?
- What is The Secret Floor of the title?
- How does Karli travel back in time?
- How did Karli feel when he could not get back to the secret floor to warn his friends?
- How did Karli find out what had happened to his friends after the Second World War?



Activity 3: **Comparison of Then and Now (Social Studies)**

Working in groups copy and cut out the cards in **Appendix 1**. Enlarge if wished.
Study and discuss each card then place it in one of the following three categories.
Compare answers with other groups and give reasons for your answers.

Then

Now

Then and Now



Activity 4:

Read Statements Then Explain The Context and Content (Literacy)

Appendix 2 has a series of statements which are made in the film by different characters.

Make copies of the cards and laminate if wished. Working in small groups take turns at picking a card and discussing exactly what it demonstrates in the film, e.g. when Hannah and Georg talk about some of the things Karli has told them about being from the future.

Describe the scene in the film and what is happening or being discussed. Add additional explanations where needed.

At the end of the activity the groups should come together and see how much they agree on the meaning and purpose on the cards.

Activity 5: Describing Principal Characters in Film (Literacy) (Social Studies)

Production design is one of the Ten Elements in Film and Screen Learning. It creates a visual identity which is crucial to set the tone for the audience, considering 'when' (time period) and 'where' (locations) the story being told, who the storytellers are as characters (through costume, hair and makeup etc).

This creates the visual identity of a Film and Screen product.

Costume and set are used to show the time period and setting of a film. **Image 5** shows the three main characters set in 1938.

Describe how each dressed and what it tells us

With these in mind, describe how this has been achieved through looking at the still images contained in the pack. Compare this to how children and young people dress nowadays.



Activity 6: **Identifying examples of Framing (Literacy)**

Framing is a technique used in films which enables the film maker to draw particular attention to a key point of information in the film. It is a case of 'show don't tell'. It is telling the audience where to look and how to feel at that particular moment in the scene. This is another of the Ten Elements of Film and Screen Learning.

An example of framing is shown in **Image 1** where we see Karli in the lift looking anxious. Another is when we see Hannah and Karli peeping round the pillar when they are looking for the thief in **Image 3**.

Using this information as examples, watch the trailer and see if you can identify instances of framing where we see an image which tells us exactly what is happening and adds to what we know about the narrative and characters.



Activity 7: **Use of Colour (Design)**

Colour, another of the Ten Elements, is widely recognised as is a key factor in creating an emotional tone for a Film and Screen product. It is a powerful storytelling tool.

For example, most of the scenes in 1938 use a limited palette of warm colours to create a feeling of claustrophobia and age. The lighting is yellowish throughout. Whereas, the modern day scenes are full of bright colours and give the impression of fresh clear mountain air and freedom. These features apply to the clothing worn by the characters and in the gardens too.

Create a picture using either of these two colour groupings, i.e. warm tones or bright fresh multi colour tones. These pictures can be of any subject or abstract. Paints, crayons or magazine collages can all be experimented with. Group all of each set of pictures together. Compare these and see how they create a tonal effect which was seen in the film.



Activity 8: **True or False, (Social Studies) (Health and Wellbeing)**

This activity can either be done in small groups or as a class activity on the interactive whiteboard. Examine the statements listed on **Appendix 3**.

The first part of the activity is to answer each statement as either True or False **as it appears in the film**.

The second part of the activity is to explore and discuss the moral value of the true statements and how this would make learners feel today.

An extension activity would be to use a variety of sources to learn more about the rise of National Socialism and persecution of the Jews. This is a challenging topic and has to be handled in an age appropriate way.



Appendix 2: Activity 4

**Weird shoes.
Should I clean them?**

**I asked Georg to take my
necklace to my room.**

**You have no idea what
they are allowed to do.**

**Karli tries to take a photo
in 1938 with his phone.**

**The records must be tiny.
No records, it's all in
the cloud.**

**We will sneak everywhere
and check everyone.**

**The shoeshine boy works
till late. No tips and his
siblings won't eat.**

**We will be father's
eyes and ears.**

**A chip circuit board
and a battery.**

**You have to dress
differently. You stick out
like a sore thumb.**

**That box does everything
for you. But suddenly
when it doesn't work,
you're stuck. Right?**

**Will the Nazis still be in
power in your time?**

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Useful websites/links:

IWM Learning & Classroom Resources – Imperial War Museums:

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/learning/resources>

This includes World War 1 and World War 2 resources and materials but not directly relating to the prelude of World War 2 in which the film is set.

Another film which deals similarly with World War 2 is *L'Adventure Des Marguerites*.

Imagine War KS2 Resource Pack:

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resourcet2-t-72358-imagine-war-ks2resource-pack>

This is a free download and looks at life during World War 2. There are a range of further materials for First and Second Level activities as a post script to the film. It indicates what Karli knew was facing his friends from 1938.

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas CfE Second Level IDL Topic Assessment:

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/the-boy-in-the-striped-pyjamas-cfe-second-level-topic-assessment-cfe-pa-2548590>

This free download deals with the fate that would have awaited Hannah and her family had they not escaped.

These are challenging topics which require sensitive handling.

Kristallnacht – Students – Britannica Kids – Homework Help:

<https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/Kristallnacht/331414>

Kristallnacht Facts for Kids:

<https://kids.kiddle.co/Kristallnacht>

What was Kindertransport? – BBC Newsround:

<https://bbc.co.uk/newsround/46877532>

This is an item about the efforts made to rescue Jewish children from the Nazi threat between 1939–1945.

More information:

Anne Frank's Diary was a contemporaneous account of a Jewish girl in hiding in Amsterdam in 1942–1944 having fled Germany. There are numerous sources and films which reference this.



Evaluating this resource

We hope that you found this resource useful and appropriate. Please do send us any film reviews, letters from your pupils, documentation of classwork and your feedback by e-mailing olivia.knight@dca.org.uk

Would you make a good Discovery Film Festival Case Study?

We are seeking a number of simple Case Studies in how teachers have used or are using Discovery films in the classroom across Curriculum for Excellence and across the Levels.

Any case studies that we develop would be intended for presentation on GLOW, the Creativity Portal and on Discovery Film Festival websites. We have a simple template to be completed and are keen to have classwork and documentation included. If you would like to be a Discovery Case Study please e-mail olivia.knight@dca.org.uk