Noor Inayat-Khan: A Woman of Conspicuous Courage

An education pack for Key Stages 3 and 4

TEACHER’S NOTES
A note to teachers

This is the story of a shy writer, poet and musician who found herself, in the 1940s, at the centre of some of the world's most dramatic events. Noor Inayat-Khan, a young Muslim woman from the family at the forefront of the movement to bring Sufism to the West, was shot at Dachau Concentration Camp at the age of 30.

In her short time on this earth she made many choices, from learning musical instruments and studying child psychology, to changing the name by which she was known, to becoming a specialist in wireless telegraphy. Ultimately she chose to sacrifice her safety and place herself in peril so that Paris might have a chance of becoming a free city once more. For this, she paid the ultimate price.

The Parisians know this young woman, born in Moscow, by her code name: Madeleine, of the Resistance. They still remember her contribution today.

Hers is just one of more than 20,000 names inscribed on a vast monument overlooking the Thames, the CWGC's Runnymede Memorial. The names belong to men and women of the Commonwealth air forces of the Second World War who have no known grave. Their bodies were never recovered, yet their stories of extraordinary courage live on. We welcome school visits to our Runnymede Memorial, which now features a virtual exhibition available on-site.

Teachers are welcome to contact the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation to arrange a free visit to the Runnymede Memorial.
Our pack includes six sessions: an introduction to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, followed by five PowerPoint presentations.

Each session is supported by:
Teacher’s notes
Resources
A set of downloadable sources and resources.

Noor’s story – that of a Muslim woman who proved herself an artist and a scientific technician- transcends many traditional barriers.

So we’ll be looking at Noor’s artistic beginnings, her spiritual background and deep-held values, and also her ability to send and decode wireless transmissions on 1940s technology.

We would like to extend our thanks to the Association of Independent Museums and Biffa Award for funding this set of resources.
Further Reading and Resources

We recommend use of these materials alongside two additional texts. These are not essential, but Noor’s story raises questions at every twist and turn and these cover her life and writings in detail.

The first is the most recent biography of Noor, Spy Princess, Basu, S (2006). Sutton Publishing Ltd, Stroud which can be found in Kindle Edition here.

The second is Noor’s published work, Twenty Jataka Tales. We use a short story from it in the course of our sessions. It shows Noor’s creative direction at the time of publishing in terms of her writing. She drew and painted also, but Twenty Jataka Tales was illustrated by an already-established and well-known illustrator, rather than by Noor. You can find a hard copy in our resources.
Lesson Progression

**DECK 1**: How did early life prepare Noor?

**DECK 2**: How did Noor get involved in the war?

**DECK 3**: Code cracking and secret messages
   The Suitcase Wireless Set, Codes and codebreaking

**DECK 4**: Noor's Mission

**DECK 5**: Remembering Noor
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The short film ‘The work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission’ gives a good overview of the organisation which has created this Education Pack.

Each of the sources pictured in the PowerPoint Presentations is available to download and print for deeper study with students.

We are indebted to the Cryptomuseum (www.Cryptomuseum.com) for a full, downloadable manual for the Type 3 Mark II suitcase radio.

You can watch a short film featuring a specialist explaining one of the few suitcase sets still in existence. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission thanks the National Radio Centre, based at Bletchley Park, for their kind permission to film the Type 3 Mark II suitcase set at their museum.
Preparation: Remembering the Missing

By the end of the session the session students will

Know about the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Understand the concept of those who are ‘missing’
Know that the Runnymede Memorial is a place to remember more than 20,000 missing servicemen and women

Starter:


Main Activity:

Runnymede Memorial is run by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, but it doesn't have any of its characteristic gravestones. Instead, it lists more than 20,000 names.

Find names/photographs of 10 people whose names are recorded at Runnymede. How much can you find out about each one?

In groups, present their stories.
SESSION 1 - Noor’s life before the war

By the end of the session the session students will have:

Understood Noor Inayat-Khan's religious and cultural background
Examined the career choices she made and her achievements up to 1940 and the Fall of France
Recognised Noor Inayat-Khan as a global figure who had known many cultures.
Investigated other nationalities represented at the CWGC Runnymede Memorial.

Starter: Presentation 1, Slide 2

- Look at the baby photos of well known people.
- How do students feel about their own baby photos?
- What sort of things do baby photos tell us? Note:
  i. Style and date of clothing
  ii. Props – what is surrounding the people that might be a ‘tell’? Are there any ‘symbols’?
  iii. How well off are these people. Can you tell whether they are affluent or not? How?
  iv. How do you think these people are feeling at the moment the photograph is being taken? How certain can we be about this?
- Now turn to photograph of Noor – what can we tell from this?
- Using timeline and SOURCE 1 add the details of Noor's early life and the family's reason for leaving Moscow. Read passage from The Spy Princess outlining the political climate in Moscow and the family's flight from the city.
Main activity: Presentation 1, Slides 3-8

Look at photographs of Noor and her family (Sources 2 and 3)

Q: What can we tell about Noor Inayat-Khan from these pictures?

Questions to consider:
• What was Noor’s life like as she grew?
• Do the pictures portray her and her family as poor?
• What clothes are the members of the photographs wearing? What conclusions do you draw from this?
• Is anyone holding props which show what might be important to the people in the pictures? Can you tell what might have been important to them?

Build a picture of her childhood and young adulthood from the images you see.

Activity:
Using the information from these slides, and from timeline RESOURCE 1, create a resume for Noor.
SESSION 2 - Noor’s Recruitment and Training

By the end of the session the session students will have:

Deduced from sources how Noor was recruited, appointed and trained

Understood the basic workings of the Suitcase Set Type 3 Mark II with respect to
   i. The elements of a suitcase receiver/transmitter
   ii. Sound waves and how they are measured

Starter: Presentation 2, Slides 4, 6 and 7

Key Questions:

What do you think this document was used for?
Why do you think it was used in this way?
What does it tell us about how Noor was recruited and when she joined?

Noor was randomly selected for the job of wireless operator, learning to use a Morse key to send and receive messages.

Use Slide 5 to experiment with Morse code...
Main Activity

Presentation 2, Slides 8 and 9

These are two reports: a preliminary report on Noor when she first began SOE training (Slide 8) and a report in April 1943 indicating Noor's progress (Slide 9)

Slide 8- Preliminary report:

What were Noor's classes when she was being trained? Why do you think she would need each one 'in the field’?

Can you list some of Noor's strengths and weaknesses according to this assessor? Where is Noor making progress?

Slide 9 - Report April 1943.

What is different about this report from the first one? Is it comparable? What does the writer see as Noor's strengths and weaknesses? Do you agree with his conclusions?

ACTIVITY:

In a mock exercise we imagine most of Noor's trainers did not think her fit to go out to work in in France as an undercover agent. In groups, students devise a speech to talk about why Noor should be approved as an undercover agent.
SESSION 3 - CODE CRACKING AND SECRET MESSAGES

Main activity
Use the downloadable Operating Instructions - Suitcase set type 3 Mark II. These are supplied by kind permission of the Cryptomuseum at www.cryptomuseum.com.

This is 1940s technology, now almost 80 years old. It is no longer used in this form. But Noor had to understand it and even know how to repair it herself when things went wrong. We can't do the whole course Noor did as she was prepared for life behind enemy lines. But we can:
- get the basic idea behind how transmitters and receivers worked then
- decode some of the language, diagrams, symbols and signs to find out how Noor might have operated in Paris.

Deck 3 explains how the suitcase set works.

Look at the Suitcase Set operating instructions.

P1 Equipment list
What do you notice on the equipment list?
What sort of things did the suitcase contain?
How much did it weigh?

P2 Schematic of suitcase
Can you find
Where the electrical current is measured
Where the spares are kept
The headphone socket
Where you plug in the crystals (oscillators)
Where Noor could select the wavelength chosen by London

A (8th and 9th pages) Can you find any rules for putting up an aerial outdoors and indoors?

ACTIVITY: The operating instructions are complicated and take time to read. Think how useful a ‘Quick Reference Guide’ would have been. Could you design one?
SESSION 4

By the end of the session the session students will have:
Pieced together elements of Noor's mission while in Paris
Learnt that our knowledge of Noor's time during her mission is dictated by the documentation which survives.
Acknowledged that, as in all historical investigations, we can:
• Deduce some information from documentation
• Surmise some information drawing conclusions from her training, what Paris was like, etc

Starter:

What are the best conditions for the Lysander plane to make a covert drop near Paris?

Brainstorm these - good weather, full moon, arrangements made for someone to meet Noor, best transport from drop site to city during a curfew.

In May 1943 Noor was put into a Lysander and flown to France, but there was no-one to meet the plane when it arrived and they had to turn round and come back again.

In groups read Deck 4 slide 2, Noor's mission orders. Emphasise that though women couriers had been sent out to France, Noor was the first female wireless operator to be sent out behind enemy lines.
Main activity:

Look at Deck 4 slide 3, a handwritten message from Noor.

What was Noor asking for?
What is the quality of paper she is using?
What does this suggest about the resources she had in Paris?
Is there any information about how skilled she was in this note?

Noor’s circuit compromised even as she flew over to France to take up post. Only a few weeks into her mission the Gestapo’s net began to close.

Look at slide, the telegram suggesting Noor has been arrested.

What is the date of the telegram, and who is the sender?
What does it say has happened? How do they communicate it in this perilous communication?
What do they offer to do?
Is there any information about other members of the circuit?
How trustworthy is this communication, do you think?

Noor was sent first to the local police headquarters – from which she made two attempts to escape – and then to Pforzheim prison in Germany. Though we cannot get a full picture of what happened to her at the time, accounts from those who had dealings with her do exist.

Look at Deck 4 slides 5 and 6.
These are two accounts of Noor’s existence in prison. Examine the ‘Nacht und Nebel’ concept, explained in the former prison governor's testimony.

ACTIVITY: The governor of the prison talks about the conditions Madeleine was held as ‘Nacht und Nebel’. Create an annotated drawing (infographic) using evidence from these two accounts to construct a picture of what life was like for Madeleine and the other women at the prison.
HOMEWORK AFTER SESSION 4 IN PREPARATION FOR SESSION 5:
See if you can find an object which reflects some aspect of Noor’s story for you. Bring it in with you to session 5.

SESSION 5

By the end of the session the session students will have:
Reflected on Noor’s story.
Thought about what resonances Noor’s story has for them

Main activity:

This is a session in the round where students present their object/response to Noor’s story. It is a useful focus for assessment. The students might refer to the historical sources they have encountered or the technical knowledge and information they have gained.

These contributions can be filmed or form the contents of an assembly if deemed appropriate.

Plenary: Discussion

What symbol would students choose to show how the life of Noor Inayat-Khan has ‘resonated’ with them?

If possible, write on small card and put in envelope.

This can be put in a display or, if the school is close enough, schools are welcome to bring their inscriptions to place beneath Noor’s name inscribed at the Runnymede Memorial.