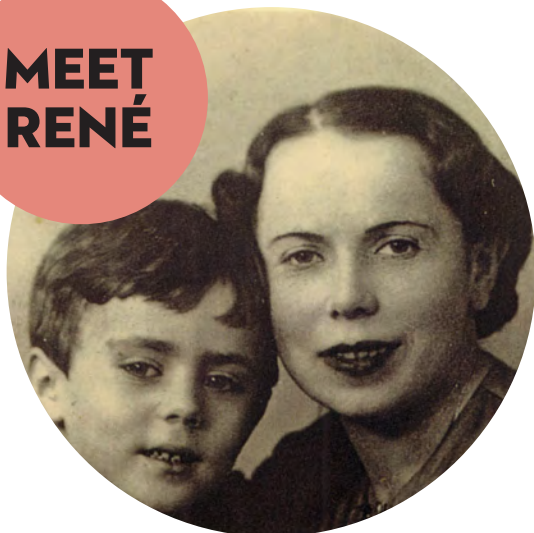


MEET
RENÉ

René, age six, and his mother. Luxembourg, 1940.

BIOGRAPHY:

René was born in 1934 in Luxembourg. His parents, Mira and Wolf, emigrated from Poland in search of better opportunities. René had a happy childhood surrounded by lots of friends and family members. René's parents descended from Jewish families in Poland and they practiced some Jewish religious traditions. When the Germans invaded Luxembourg in May 1940, René's family moved to Belgium, which was also occupied by the Germans, and they lived there for two years. In hopes of escaping Europe, the family fled to the south of France with plans to travel to South America by boat, but they were arrested by French police. René's mother was deported and he was sent to live in a group home run by a Jewish organization in 1942. The organization, recognizing the danger that Jewish children faced, sent him to live with foster families and then in a Catholic convent school under a false name. After the war, René hoped to reunite with his parents, but they never returned. He continued to live in France and then moved to Poland, China and the United States before settling in Canada, where he worked as a professor.

You are going to read René's memoir called *A Childhood Adrift*. His book is pretty long, so you only have to read **pages 1-106**.

René's story is complicated and contains lots of historical information. Below are some important places and dates to know.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

René's story during the Holocaust takes place in three different countries. When World War II began, his family lived in **Luxembourg**, a small country located in Western Europe between France, Belgium and Germany. Luxembourg was occupied by the German army in May **1940**. Next, his family moved to **Belgium**, located beside Luxembourg, and also occupied by the Germans in **1940**. The German army controlled Belgium and the German occupation government gradually put in place many different anti-Jewish policies. The last place René's family lived was **France**, which was also occupied by the German army in **1940**. The Germans occupied the northern part of France, called the Occupied Zone, and put in place many anti-Jewish policies. The southern part of France, called the Free Zone, was run by a new French government called **Vichy** that went along with German policies and orders, and even created its own anti-Jewish policies that applied to the whole country. French police helped arrest Jews to deport to Nazi camps where most were killed, starting in **1942**. Due to the increasing risk of capture by the French police or the German occupiers, many Jews went into hiding by using false papers and pretending to be Christian. There were organizations that helped Jewish children, like René, find safe places to hide. France was liberated by the Allies in the summer and fall of **1944**. Approximately **77,000** Jews in France were killed during the Holocaust, including René's parents.

"I did feel like a stranger in a world that was not my own and was compelled, paradoxically perhaps, to be true to my false identity at all times."

— **RENÉ GOLDMAN**

