

# Noor Inayat Khan

Famous for being the first female radio operator sent into Nazi-occupied France by the SOE (Special Operations Executive), Noor Inayat Khan was a wartime British secret agent. She was of Indian descent and was eventually captured, arrested and executed by the German's Secret State Police - the Gestapo.

Born in Moscow, on New Year's Day, 1914, Noor Inayat Khan had an Indian father, who was a musician and Sufi teacher, and an American mother. Interestingly, she was a direct descendant of Tipu Sultan, who was the 18<sup>th</sup> century Muslim ruler of Mysore. Khan's family were moved by her father first to London and then to Paris. It was here that Khan was educated and later went on to work writing children's stories. After the fall of France, Khan escaped to England and by November 1940, she had joined the WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force). In late 1942, she was recruited to join SOE as a radio operator. According to some sources, some of those who trained her were unsure about her suitability; however, they were proven wrong, when, in June 1943, she was flown to France to become the radio operator for the 'Prosper' resistance network in Paris. Whilst here, she was known by her codename – 'Madeleine'. In the months that followed, many members of the network were arrested but Khan chose to remain in France despite the danger and spent the summer moving throughout the country, attempting to send messages back to London while avoiding capture from the Gestapo.

Unfortunately, Khan was unable to avoid capture and in October, she was betrayed by a Frenchwoman and subsequently arrested by the Gestapo. Unwisely, Khan had kept copies of all her secret signals and the Germans were able to use this information, along with her radio, to deceive London into sending new agents - straight into the hands of the waiting Gestapo! Refusing to give up hope, Khan managed to escape from prison; however, she was recaptured just a few hours later. Khan was moved to Pforzheim prison in Germany in November 1943. Whilst here, she was kept in chains and placed in solitary confinement. Despite repeated torture, she refused to reveal any information to her torturers. In September 1944, Khan - along with three other female SOE agents - was transferred to Dachau concentration camp, which was also located in Germany, where they were shot on 13<sup>th</sup> September.

In 1949, once the war was over, Noor Khan was posthumously awarded the George Cross for her bravery.



## VOCABULARY CHECK

Match the words from the text to their closest synonym.

descent

executed

recruited

suitability

transferred

appropriateness

origin

moved

enlisted

killed

## QUESTIONS

1. Who was responsible for sending Khan to France? (1 mark)

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2. How do we know that Khan was not successful in escaping from the Nazis? (1 mark)

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3. Match the events to the correct dates. (1 mark)

Khan was born.

Khan joined the WAAF.

Khan joined the SOE.

She became a radio operator in Paris.

November 1940

June 1943

1<sup>st</sup> January 1914

late 1942

4. a) What was Khan's codename? (1 mark)

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4. b) Why do you think she was given a codename? (1 mark)

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5. What did Khan do after she chose to remain in France? (2 marks)

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6. What word in the third paragraph means 'deceived'? Circle one. (1 mark)

betrayed

arrested

Gestapo

unwisely

7. Why was it foolish for Khan to keep copies of her signals? (2 marks)

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8. What does the third paragraph show about her personality? Use evidence from the text to explain your answer fully. (3 marks)

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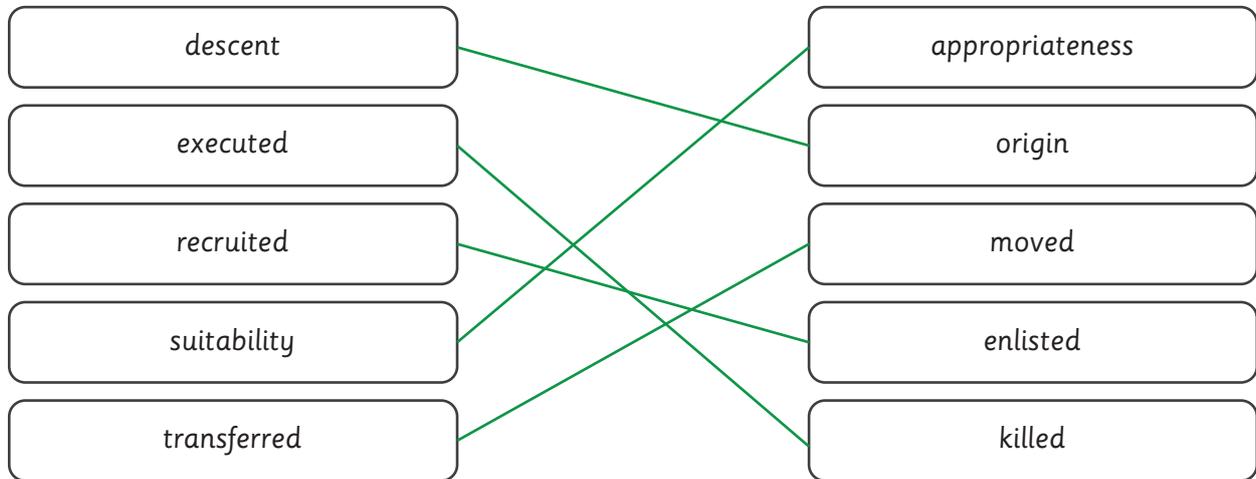
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## ANSWERS

Match the words from the text to their closest synonym.



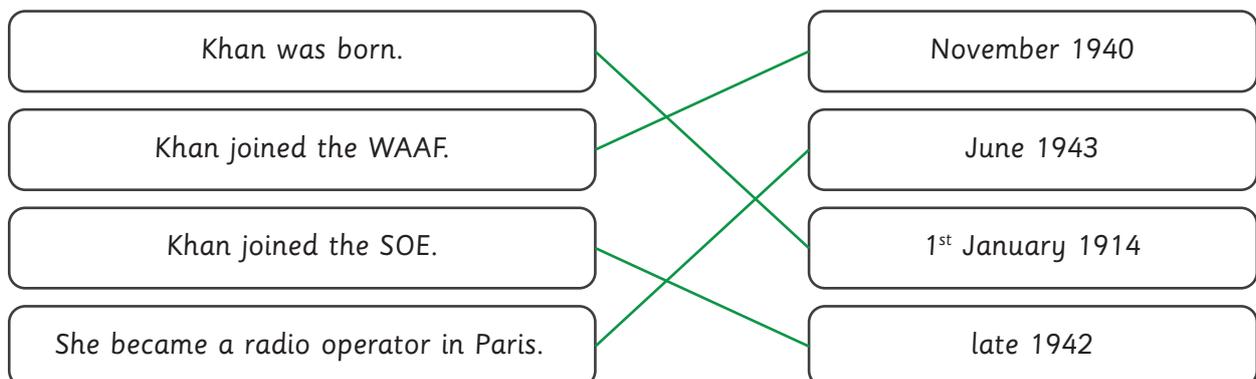
1. Who was responsible for sending Khan to France? (1 mark)

*the Special Operations Executive (SOE)*

2. How do we know that Khan was not successful in escaping from the Nazis? (1 mark)

*Because in the text it says she was “eventually executed by the Gestapo”.*

3. Match the events to the correct dates. (1 mark)



4. a) What was Khan's codename? (1 mark)

Madeline

4. b) Why do you think she was given a codename? (1 mark)

Because she was a secret agent and she needed to keep her true identity hidden from any enemy soldiers.

5. What did Khan do after she chose to remain in France? (2 marks)

She moved from place to place, trying to avoid capture whilst sending messages back to London.

6. What word in the third paragraph means 'deceived'? Circle one. (1 mark)

betrayed

arrested

Gestapo

unwisely

7. Why was it foolish for Khan to keep copies of her signals? (2 marks)

It meant that when she was captured, the Gestapo had access to all of her secret signals which allowed the Germans to trick the British into sending new agents. They could direct the British to send the agents to any destination, and, once the agents arrived there, they could be captured by the Gestapo. This would not have been possible if she had destroyed the signals.

8. What does the third paragraph show about her personality? Use evidence from the text to explain your answer fully. (3 marks)

She was determined – she escaped from prison before being recaptured.

She was reliable and loyal to the Allied forces – she refused to reveal any information despite being repeatedly tortured and kept in solitary confinement.

She was brave – she remained loyal despite being moved to different concentration camps.