



LESSON PLAN: The *Kristallnacht Pogrom* – “Night of Broken Glass”

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson students learn about the *Kristallnacht Pogrom* and consider how this pivotal event was both a culmination of Nazi antisemitic policy and a turning point that changed the course of future events. Students engage in a photo analysis and view visual history testimonies that provide background on the pogrom. They then engage in a station activity in which they analyze several primary sources that help deepen their understanding of the *Kristallnacht Pogrom*.

SUPPORTING QUESTION¹

How was the *Kristallnacht Pogrom* both a culmination of antisemitic Nazi policy and a turning point in the antisemitic campaign against the Jewish people?

- 1** The following photograph is projected (without revealing the title or identifying information): **Frankfurt Am Main Germany, The Horowitz Synagogue, Kristallnacht, November 1938**. In small groups, students complete the **See-Think-Wonder** exercise by discussing the photograph and recording their responses on the handout.
- 2** The photo title and context – the *Kristallnacht Pogrom* – are revealed to students and they share any prior knowledge about the topic. Information from **The Kristallnacht Pogrom** handout is communicated as needed to fill in gaps. As a whole group, students share significant ideas from their photo analysis and discuss some of their questions in the ‘Wonder’ column. Students also consider the following:
 - Based on what you have learned, what actions during the period 1933-1938 made the *Kristallnacht Pogrom* possible? What led to the escalation of violence to this degree?
 - What was the significance of the destruction of cultural institutions, such as synagogues? What message did this communicate to Jewish people? To German society more generally?
 - What do you imagine the people in the photograph might be thinking or doing? Explain.
 - What would you title this photograph and why?
- 3** Students watch testimony clips from individuals who discuss their experiences with the *Kristallnacht Pogrom*: **Esther Clifford (bio)** and **Kurt Messerschmidt (bio)**. As they watch the clips, students take notes on the **Testimony Reflections** handout.

¹ Do not review the supporting question with students until after Step 2 so that the topic of the photo analysis is not revealed prematurely.

4 After viewing the testimony clips, students journal and/or participate in a discussion in response to some of the following questions:

- After listening to the testimonies of Esther Clifford and Kurt Messerschmidt, what picture do you begin to create in your mind about their experiences during the *Kristallnacht Pogrom*? What do they say they saw and felt?
- In what way was the *Kristallnacht Pogrom* a *culmination* of Nazi anti-Jewish policy and action? In what way was it a *turning point* for Jews in Germany?
- Kurt says that some of the witnesses to an act of violence he encountered were disapproving, “but their disapproval was only silence and silence is what did the harm.” Why do you think the onlookers chose not to act? What do you think enabled Kurt and his friend to help when so many others seemed unable or unwilling?

5 Students participate in a station activity in which they analyze several sources about the *Kristallnacht Pogrom* in order to deepen their understanding and compare different accounts and perspectives:

- a. Copies of six primary and secondary sources are placed at different stations. Five primary source documents are included here and a textbook account of the *Kristallnacht Pogrom* should be added for the sixth station.
- b. Copies of the **Document Analysis** handout are placed at each station. Alternatively, students can create chart paper-sized versions of the handout to record their work.
- c. Groups are each assigned a station to begin. They read or observe the source and fill out the information at the top of the **Document Analysis** handout. Students continue to review and discuss the source, adding information to the chart in response to the prompts at the top of each column.
- d. When groups have completed their review, they rotate to a different station. After reviewing the new source, they add information to the chart, trying not to duplicate ideas already recorded. (Students can underline ideas from previous groups that resonate for them rather than repeating them.)
- e. Work continues in this way until groups have read all sources (or as many as time allows).

6 Students return to their original station and review the completed chart. Alternatively, the charts can be displayed so they are visible to all. The whole group participates in a discussion of some of the following questions:

- What stood out to you about the way in which the *Kristallnacht Pogrom* was planned and executed? How did it reflect the build-up of Nazi antisemitic policy over previous years?
- What different information and feelings did you take away from the photos as opposed to the texts? The primary source materials versus the secondary (i.e., textbook account)?
- Which sources offered a personal account? How did they remind you of Esther’s and Kurt’s testimonies? How did these “human stories” influence your understanding and feeling about the *Kristallnacht Pogrom*?
- What did you notice about the individual choices people made during the *Kristallnacht Pogrom* (e.g., did they incite, comply, resist, ignore, etc.)? What factors may have influenced these choices?

7 As a summative task, students reflect on the lesson supporting questions and participate in the following exercise, entitled “The *Kristallnacht Pogrom* as Culmination and Turning Point”:

- a. The terms *culmination* and *turning point* are defined (*culmination* is the highest point of something; *turning point* is a time at which something changes direction).
- b. The class is divided in half – one group is the ‘culmination’ group and the second is the ‘turning point’ group.
- c. On an index card, students write at least three ways that the *Kristallnacht Pogrom* reflected the anti-Jewish policies of the prior five years (culmination group) or how it changed the future course of events (turning point group). They draw on lesson sources (including the **Echoes & Reflections Timeline of the Holocaust**) to come up with their three ideas.
- d. Students form concentric circles (the outer circle is the culmination group and the inner circle is the turning point group). Partners face each other and share the ideas they have recorded, then rotate and continue to share as time allows. (If space doesn’t allow for circles, any form of partner sharing can be used.)

ESTIMATED COMPLETION TIME: 90 MINUTES