



Educator's Guide

Kristallnacht

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After World I, the German economy was in shambles and the nation was dejected. Hitler manipulated this state of affairs to legally rise to power and systematically strip German Jews of their rights. This slow increase in oppression culminated on Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, the night that the Nazi Party realized it could get away with genocide.

Link to video: <https://unpacked.education/video/kristallnacht/>

Big Ideas

1. The path leading up to the Holocaust was long and calculated.
2. Humans can come to accept moral atrocities when they are introduced slowly and incrementally.
3. Commemorating Kristallnacht is a step towards preventing genocide in the future

Essential Questions

1. What was the starting point of the Holocaust?
2. How did the Nazis get away with genocide?
3. What is the value in commemorating past tragedies?

Review Questions

1. Boiling frog syndrome is an analogy that describes how:
 - People can tolerate pain
 - **Humans can accept anything under the right circumstances**
 - Doing something quickly is better than doing it slowly
 - Frogs are more resilient than humans
2. The Treaty of Versailles demanded that Germany:
 - Reduce its military



- Give up territory
 - Pay reparations for the cost of World War I
 - **All of the above**
3. In 1923, Hitler was charged with _____ and sentenced to five years in prison:
- Theft
 - Manslaughter
 - **Treason**
 - Embezzlement
4. While in prison, Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*, which outlined:
- **His vision for Germany**
 - His childhood memories
 - His economic treatise
 - His hatred of Europeans
5. Herschel Grynzpan shot a Nazi official in the German embassy in Paris after:
- **His parents were deported**
 - He was expelled from his school
 - He was forced to eat pig
 - He was caught robbing a bank
6. Hitler slowly stripped Jews of their rights by:
- Organizing an anti-Jewish boycott
 - Restricting professional opportunities for Jews
 - Limiting the percentage of Jews in public schools and universities
 - **All of the above**
7. Kristallnacht means:
- Night of sorrow
 - Night of jewels
 - **Night of broken glass**
 - Night of celebration
8. Kristallnacht is significant because it:
- Involved many European leaders
 - **Demonstrated that the Nazis could get away with genocide**
 - Was the beginning of antisemitism
 - Showed that the Jews were vulnerable



Discussion Questions

1. **Boiling frog analogy:** The video used the boiling frog analogy to explain how the Nazis were able to get away with genocide. Think about how this analogy relates to the Holocaust. Who does the frog represent? Who is turning up the heat? Are there any other characters or roles in this analogy? Can you think of any other situations to which this analogy might be relevant? What might be some ways to combat boiling frog syndrome?
2. **Storytelling 101:** All stories have the same basic elements: a beginning, a middle, and an end. When retelling historical events, how do we choose where to start? For example, when describing the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt, do we begin the story with the era of slavery, or do we go back even further in history to the beginning of the Jewish people? (The [Passover Haggadah](#) includes both!)
 - Do all historical events have a clear and obvious beginning?
 - How does choosing a starting point affect how one tells a story?
 - How does it affect how other people understand the story?
 - In what ways could Kristallnacht be considered a starting point for the Holocaust?
 - If you were telling the story of the Holocaust, where might you start from, and why?
3. **Commemorations:** We are accustomed to celebrating happy occasions like birthdays and anniversaries on a personal and national level. Why do we celebrate these happy occasions? What are some examples of commemorations that are not happy? What is the value of commemorating events like Kristallnacht? How can we make these commemorations meaningful?
4. **Current events:** Kristallnacht represents a turning point in the Nazi persecution of European Jews. The October 7 2023 massacre in Israel is another tragic example of antisemitism that will change the way the world relates to Israel and the Jewish people in ways yet unseen. In what ways has the world's attitude towards antisemitism changed since 1938? In what ways has it stayed the same? What lessons can we learn from Kristallnacht that may be applicable to current events and the state of antisemitism worldwide?



Learning Activities

1. Lesson plan

Use our ready made lesson plan on Kristallnacht [HERE](#).

2. Design a commemoration event:

You have been asked to be part of a school committee that is organizing a commemorative event for Kristallnacht. Working by yourself or in a small group, design a proposal that outlines the program you are planning, your goals for the event, and any support that you will need from your school. As you draft your proposal, consider the following:

- What is Kristallnacht and why is your school commemorating it?
- Who will be in attendance? How will you engage your audience?
- What are the goals of your event? What do you want your audience to learn, do, and feel as a result of this experience?
- What messages do you want your audience to take from this event that are applicable to their lives today?
- What physical space and other items will you need in order to make your event successful?

3. Bystander effect:

The bystander effect is a social phenomenon that occurs when the presence of other people serves to discourage bystanders from intervening in an emergency situation. Read more about the bystander effect [here](#). Based on your reading, design a comic strip that illustrates the bystander effect and its relationship to the rise of Nazism. You can pick a specific historical event or develop a realistic scenario that makes sense given the time period. Write a short paragraph that explains your comic and present it to your class.

4. Who was Herschel Grynzpan?

Herschel Grynzpan was a German teen who shot a Nazi diplomat in Paris. Herschel had wanted to make a bold statement to show the world the evil of the Nazis, but his story was turned into Nazi propaganda that paved the way for Kristallnacht. Read more about Herschel Grynzpan [here](#).

If you had the opportunity to meet Herschel Grynzpan, what would you want to ask him? Prepare six thoughtful interview questions that you would like to ask. Swap your list with a friend, and write responses to at least three of their questions based on what you have learned about Herschel.



- 5. Text study:** Have your students learn the commentary of [Nachmanides](#) (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, a medieval Spanish biblical commentator) on Exodus 1:10, using [this handout](#).

Discuss with your students:

- How did Pharaoh “deal wisely” with the Jewish people? What were the different levels of oppressive decrees that he instituted? Why not just order the Jews to be killed originally?
- Compare and contrast this to the Nazi decrees against the Jews during the Holocaust. What is similar and what is different?

- 6. Kahoot:** Play our [Kahoot](#) about Kristallnacht!

Reflection Questions

- 1. Social conundrums:** The boiling frog analogy and the bystander effect both describe disturbing social phenomena. Have you experienced or witnessed either of these phenomena in your life? Do you think being informed about these human tendencies can help to counteract them? What advice would you want to give to yourself or to someone else who might be experiencing such a situation?
- 2. Connecting:** Learning about the events that led to the Holocaust can evoke strong emotions. What emotions did you experience while learning about Kristallnacht and the events that preceded it? Was there a specific story or image that triggered these emotions? What helps to ground you when you learn about difficult things (for example, talking with a trusted adult, journaling, etc...)?
- 3. What’s new?** What are three things that you learned about the rise of Nazism and Kristallnacht that you didn’t know before? What is something that surprised you? What would you like to learn more about?

Further Learning

- 1. Unpacked for Educators:**
 - [Did Jews Fight Back Against the Nazis?](#) (video)
 - [Faces of the Holocaust: The perpetrator](#) (video)
 - [Faces of the Holocaust: The victim](#) (video)
- 2. The story of Herschel Grynzpan**



- [Hitler's Pawn: The Boy Assassin and the Holocaust](#) (book by Stephen Koch)
- [The Forgotten Life of Herschel Grynszpan](#) (video and transcript)
- 3.** Conformity and the rise of Nazism
 - [The Wave](#) (book by Todd Strasser)
 - [The Wave](#) (film)
- 4.** Jewish Virtual Library
 - [The Holocaust: Kristallnacht- "Night of Broken Glass"](#) (collection of articles)
- 5.** United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, [archives on Kristellnacht](#) (pictures and oral testimonies).