

Memories of *Kristallnacht*

***Kristallnacht* lesson 1 of 2**

Teachers' Notes

On 9 and 10 November 1938, the Nazi regime conducted a series of attacks called 'pogroms' against the Jewish population in Germany and other Nazi-occupied territories. This event became known as *Kristallnacht* or 'Night of Broken Glass' because of the shattered glass that filled the streets after the vandalism and destruction of synagogues, Jewish-owned businesses and homes. In this collection of resources, we explore former Welsh resident, Julius Weil's recollections of this devastating event. Julius Weil died in Cardiff in 2021.

This lesson introduces learners to *Kristallnacht* using Julius Weil's testimony and other photographs and information. Students are asked to use these sources to write a newspaper report.

This is session 1 of 2 on the topic of *Kristallnacht* and it is recommended that teachers use both resources. It assumes a basic understanding of the Holocaust. You may wish to cover the Holocaust Educational Trust's worksheet ['Defining the Holocaust'](#) before embarking on this set of two sessions.

Curriculum links

Key Stage 4

History, Literacy skills

Lesson Plan

LEARNING AIMS

- To develop an understanding of the persecution of Jewish people under Nazi Germany.
- To understand how these devastating events relate to the lives of people living in Wales.
- To be able to respond with empathy and understanding to a historical event.

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED

- Large pieces of paper and marker pens.
- Art materials (if choosing this option).
- Transcript of the audio clip.¹

STARTER

Have the following questions displayed on the board:

- Who makes laws in this country?
- Are laws always right?

Discuss responses to these questions.

DEVELOPMENT

Introduce today's topic of *Kristallnacht*. If students have not previously studied Nazi Germany, give an overview explaining that Hitler came to power in 1933 and the events of *Kristallnacht* took place in 1938. The lead up to *Kristallnacht*, the event itself, and the aftermath were all crucial preludes to the Holocaust perpetrated by Nazi Germany and their collaborators during WW2.

Distribute and read the '*Kristallnacht* information sheet' and after reading the first paragraph, listen to Julius Weil's account: <https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/1222341>.

Read the rest of the information sheet discussing responses to the text, photographs, and Julius Weil's testimony.

MAIN

After reading and listening to the material, ask students to create a mind-map exploring the different descriptions and key facts about *Kristallnacht*. This can be done either as a whole class or in smaller groups.

Students are then to begin writing a short newspaper article from the perspective of an **independent observer** (i.e., not a perpetrator or a victim) who witnessed *Kristallnacht* events. Students may find it helpful to consider these questions to help form their piece:

- Where are you? (e.g., outside the synagogue).

¹ We added the audio clip's transcript, which you may choose to share with your students if you think it would be helpful. The transcript is in English and Welsh whilst the audio clip is in English only.

- What can you see? (e.g., glistening broken glass covering the streets).
- What can you hear? (e.g., the sound of smashing glass).

Some of these reports can be read and shared with the class.

PLENARY

Students are to explore the following questions, first discussing in pairs, then feeding back some ideas to the whole class:

- How might Julius Weil and other Jewish young people have felt during and after the events of *Kristallnacht*?
- Many Jews who survived the attacks decided to flee. How would they have felt doing so? Consider the positive and negative reactions.
- Consider the questions you responded to at the beginning of the session. Now you know more about Nazi Germany's pogrom and the laws imposed on the Jewish population after *Kristallnacht*, have your responses changed?

Transcript

Julius Weil: *Kristallnacht*

Interviewer: So, you mentioned *Kristallnacht*.

Julius Weil: Yes.

Interviewer: So, you have some memories of, of that?

Julius Weil: [Pause.] Oh, yes.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more?

Julius Weil: Well, I, I wasn't out and about when it happened, but all the sort of Jewish businesses in, in Cologne [Köln in German] were smashed up. Windows broken; more or less closed down. My synagogue, well, all the synagogues were trashed, burnt, and smashed up. The school I went to, which was sort of attached to one of the synagogues, was also completely destroyed. So, school did not continue after the ninth, tenth of November, but there were some facilities organised in, in a big building which, which had rooms in it, which was a Jewish community centre, I suppose. So, that's where the schooling continued. My headmaster, immediately, [pause] got very busy trying to get the whole of the school transferred to Britain. And my class, which was the sort of third class of high school, in other words thirteen, twelve, thirteen-year olds, was the first class to come over to England.