

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

KRISTALLNACHT POGROM

The Neuberger's **In Their Own Words** website provides a diverse range of testimony excerpts from Holocaust survivors and witnesses. This activity focuses on the experiences of Jews who experienced or witnessed the Kristallnacht pogrom. This wave of violence swept across the German Reich on November 9 and 10, 1938. It was an unprecedented episode of a modern nation turning on a segment of its own citizenry. The Neuberger's testimony collection contains valuable first-person accounts of this turning point in the history of the Holocaust.

Listening to the recorded testimony of Holocaust survivors provides an important opportunity to discover how the Holocaust affected individuals and families. It demonstrates the human dimension of history and how decisions, big and small, affect people.

The testimony excerpts included in **In Their Own Words** are curated from longer, full length testimonies that average between 90 minutes and two hours. We've chosen to highlight some specific moments that are rich in detail and describe important moments in the survival of the narrator.

Remember that most Holocaust survivors are not trained historians. They may not recall all the dates or details perfectly. Similarly, they may not know what was happening in other parts of Europe or other events taking place. However, their recollections of the events they experienced personally provide us with a unique window into the history of the Holocaust.

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify and discuss the various ways in which Jews experienced the Kristallnacht pogrom and why it was a turning point in civil society
- Assess the decision-making process of individuals and the factors that guide these decisions
- Analyze primary source material (the recorded accounts of Holocaust survivors)

This lesson focuses on how the Kristallnacht pogrom affected Jews across the German Reich which includes Austria (annexed to Germany in March 1938) and the Sudetenland (annexed to Germany in October 1938). Students will also have the option of completing a hands-on remembrance activity, detailed later in this lesson plan.

ACTIVITY I

Learning about the Kristallnacht pogrom through First Person Testimony

APPROACH:

View the testimony excerpts of Elfreda Fuchs from **IN THEIR OWN WORDS** who recalls witnessing the Kristallnacht pogrom in Austria. The testimony can be found at <http://intheirownwords.net/elfreda-elfriede-fuchs>

If time permits and you would like to include an additional account of experiencing the Kristallnacht pogrom, you could show the Neuberger curated film, "A Stolen Childhood: Kristallnacht Remembered" which is approximately 8 minutes long. It can be accessed online at <https://vimeo.com/144948240>

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The Kristallnacht pogrom got its name as a result of the shattered glass that covered German streets in the wake of the violence on November 9 and 10, 1938. The broken glass came from the windows of synagogues and Jewish-owned businesses that had been vandalized and destroyed during the violence.

The Kristallnacht pogrom was a turning point in the Nazi persecution of Jews. It marked the first time that the Nazi German regime arrested and imprisoned Jews on a national scale simply because they were Jews. Approximately 30,000 Jewish men from across the German Reich were deported to concentration camps during the pogrom. At least 100 Jews were killed during the violence while hundreds more were killed by the violence and brutal conditions they experienced in the concentration camps.

The Kristallnacht pogrom was evidence that Jews were no longer welcome in the German Reich, and as a result many attempted the difficult process of moving to another country. It was an important turning point in how Nazi Germany treated the Jews of Europe.

Questions:

- 1 What are some of the strongest memories that Elfreda has from witnessing the Kristallnacht pogrom?
- 2 Why do you think it was so difficult for Elfreda's father to imagine that could be targeted during the Kristallnacht pogrom?
- 3 What does this account of the Kristallnacht pogrom tell us about human rights, citizenship or civil society?
- 4 Stones of Remembrance: The violence of the Kristallnacht pogrom claimed many Jewish lives between November 9 and 10, 1938. In the weeks that followed, many others died from wounds and injuries they incurred during the pogrom.

In Jewish tradition, it is not customary to place flowers the graves of loved ones. Instead, small stones are placed on graves as a physical way to honour the deceased. Stones are permanent reminders of that the person is remembered.

In this activity students can create stones of remembrance to honour the memory of those killed in the Holocaust.

Materials needed:

- Stones of varying sizes that can be collected from nature or from craft stores.
- Paints and brushes, or markers suitable for painting and writing on stone.
- Modge-Podge or similar white-glue based product that can be used for decoupage technique on stones. Brushes or sponge to apply Modge-Podge.
- Holocaust themed images from magazines or downloaded and printed from reliable internet sources.

Method:

- After listening to the testimony and reflecting on the questions, create a visual response to the effects of the Kristallnacht pogrom on Jewish individuals and families.
- Pictures or symbols may be painted directly onto the stones, or text may be written using the appropriate markers.
- Images may be adhered onto the stones using the decoupage method, or in combination with text. See the examples below for inspiration. These examples were created by the students of Ms. Caroline Slifkin in the UK.

When the stones of remembrance are completed, create a classroom display so that students can share their work and reflections.



For more information on the Kristallnacht Pogrom visit:

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM)
at <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/kristallnacht>