

Essential Questions:

- How did the Nazi Party inculcate the German population in 1930s Germany?
- What were the Nuremberg Laws, and how do they reflect the build-up of anti-Jewish policies and decrees in 1930s Germany?
- What is the meaning and significance of Kristallnacht?
- Why was it so difficult for Jews to leave Germany?

Subjects

Social Studies
ELA

Grades

5-8

Lesson Objectives:

- Understand how prejudice can lead to discrimination
- Explore the world's responses to the plight of the German Jews and the onset of World War II.
- Identify Nazi policies and practices between 1933 and 1939 that intensified antisemitism and isolated Jewish people.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT FOR THIS LESSON

Friedrich is the story of the friendship of the non-Jewish narrator and his Jewish neighbors. *Friedrich* begins in 1925, when the narrator is four years old, and ends in 1942, when he is 17. It takes place during the period when the Nazis came to power and into the early years of World War II.

Between 1933 and 1938, more than 400 new decrees and regulations were passed that gradually but systematically took away the rights and property of German Jews, transforming them from citizens into outcasts. The first wave of Nazi antisemitic legislation, from 1933 to 1934, focused on limiting the participation of Jews in German public life. In September 1935, the Nazi leaders announced the “Nuremberg Laws” which institutionalized many of the racial theories prevalent in Nazi ideology. Nazi legislation in 1937-38 increased the segregation of Jews from their fellow Germans, ultimately requiring Jews to identify themselves in ways that would permanently separate them from the rest of the population. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “[Anti-Jewish Legislation In Prewar Germany](#).” Holocaust Encyclopedia.)

On November 9–10, 1938, a series of pogroms against the Jewish population in Germany and Austria came to be known as *Kristallnacht* (The Night of Broken Glass) because of the shattered glass that littered the streets after the vandalism and destruction of Jewish-owned businesses, synagogues, and homes. During Kristallnacht, some 30,000 Jewish men were rounded up and taken to concentration camps. This was the first time Nazi officials made massive arrests of Jews specifically because they were Jews, without any other reason for arrest. In the aftermath of Kristallnacht, the government argued that the Jews themselves were to blame for the pogrom and imposed a fine of one billion Reichsmark (\$400+ million US dollars in 1938) on the German Jewish community. The government also confiscated all insurance payouts to Jews whose businesses and homes were looted or destroyed. Kristallnacht was one of the most important turning points in Nazi antisemitic policy as it expanded and radicalized measures aimed at removing Jews entirely from German economic and social life. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “[Kristallnacht](#).” Holocaust Encyclopedia.)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- *Friedrich* - Hans Peter Richter (1970)
- Testimony clips from [Herman Cohn](#) and [Margaret Lambert](#)
- Optional Activity: [What Rights Are Most Important to Me?](#)

EXTERNAL LINKS

- Facing History and Ourselves: [Preparing Students for Difficult Conversations](#)
- USHMM [Holocaust Encyclopedia](#)
- Echoes and Reflections [Timeline of the Holocaust](#)
- Museum of Jewish Heritage [Teacher’s Guide Growing Up in Nazi Germany: Teaching *Friedrich* by Hans Peter Richter](#)

LESSON SEQUENCE

DO NOW

- What rights do you think are important for the government to protect?

DISCUSSION

- Can you think of any examples of rights being taken from a group of people in a democracy? Have you or people you know ever personally experienced a violation of rights?
- Optional Activity: [What Rights Are Most Important to Me?](#)

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Have students watch testimony clips from [Herman Cohn](#) and [Margaret Lambert](#) as they explain how they were affected by the Nuremberg Laws and growing antisemitism in Nazi Germany. After viewing the testimonials, use the prompts below to lead a class discussion:

- How do Margaret and Herman say things changed in Germany after 1933? What were they forced to give up?
- What rights were taken from Margaret and Herman? What impact did this have on them?
- How do you think social and peer pressure played a role in antisemitism during this period?
- What personal toll do you think persecution and isolation took on young people like Margaret and Herman?

MINI LECTURE AND WHOLE-CLASS DISCUSSION

In 1935, Germany passed the Nuremberg Laws, which revoked the citizenship of “non-Aryans” and made it even easier to exclude German Jews socially and culturally. These laws stripped Jews of their rights. They could no longer vote or own businesses. Many were forced out of their jobs and most could no longer go to school.

During the 1930s, German Jews saw themselves as loyal German citizens, and many did not want to leave Germany. Many believed that this latest rise in antisemitism would come and go, like so many throughout history. None of them knew how bad things would actually get.

On November 9–10, 1938, the Nazi party organized a “spontaneous” mob attack against Jews throughout Germany and Austria. That night, thousands of attacks took place on Jews, Jewish-owned property, and synagogues. At least 30,000 Jewish men were rounded up and deported to Dachau, the first

Nazi concentration camp, 91 Jews were killed, over 1,400 synagogues were desecrated, and thousands of Jewish-owned shops were destroyed.

After Kristallnacht, it became clear that things were not going to go back to normal. Most German Jews now tried to leave the country. However, most countries that had very strict immigration laws wouldn't let Jewish refugees in. The Nazis also made it very difficult for Jews to leave - they had to turn over most of their valuables and money to the government before being allowed to leave. This made it much more difficult to find another country that would accept them.

Discussion Prompts:

- How do the Nuremberg Laws and Kristallnacht show the dangers of prejudice and discrimination?
- How do you think German Jews responded to this discrimination by their government?
- Why do you think many German Jews believed that the rise of antisemitism would eventually go away? How might this belief have influenced their actions or inactions?
- What do you think it must have been like for the Jewish community during Kristallnacht, when their homes, businesses, and synagogues were attacked? How might the attack have changed their sense of safety or belonging?

**ACTIVE
ENGAGEMENT -
BOOK ANALYSIS**

Have students read *Reasons* (1936) from *Friedrich* and answer the analysis questions below:

- Why did many Germans join the Nazi Party? What are the Narrator's father's justifications for his Party membership?
- The Narrator's father accepts the situation under the Nazis and joins the Party, however, he also encourages the Schneiders to leave Germany - how would you explain these differing perspectives?
- Why do you think Herr Schneider says, "I understand you very, very well. Perhaps — if I weren't a Jew —

perhaps I would have acted just like you. But I am a Jew”?

- What are the reasons Herr Schneider gives for staying in Germany? Why does Herr Schneider take comfort that it's the government that is antisemitic?
- The Narrator's father is disturbed by what he overheard at his Party meeting that night in 1936. He says, “I don't by any means agree with the Party in everything it does or demands. But then... doesn't every party and every leadership have its dark side?” - What loyalties does a person owe to their company they work for or political party?

Have students read *The Pogrom* (1938) from *Friedrich* and answer the analysis questions below:

- During Kristallnacht, destruction was encouraged and went unpunished by the authorities. What did the police do in this chapter? Why?
- How did the Narrator react to the orders to participate in the destruction? How does the mob react to his resistance?
- The Narrator says, “I felt so strong! I could have sung I was so drunk with the desire to swing my hammer.” Why do you think Friedrich's friend enjoyed smashing? Do you think that pleasure in destruction is a common emotion?
- The mob didn't steal anything in the Schneiders' apartment. Instead they smashed the Meissen china and tore the books apart. What might the author be saying about the desire to hurt and destroy?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- [Information Quest: Kristallnacht](#) (iWitness activity) - students will engage with testimonies of individuals who experienced the Kristallnacht pogrom.
- [Challenges of Escape](#) (USHMM Lesson) - students will evaluate the complex factors that led German Jews to seek to emigrate from Nazi Germany and the complex factors that impeded their immigration to the United

States in the 1930s and 1940s. ***also available in Spanish**

- [Entry Denied, Dignity Restored-The Story of the St. Louis](#)
(Yad Vashem Lesson) ***also available in French**

