The November Pogrom Educational Guide (Grades 8-12)

WHAT HAPPENED?

On **November 9–10, 1938**, Nazi leaders organized state-sponsored violent attacks against Jews in Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland.

The Nazis used the assassination of a German diplomat, Ernst vom Rath, in Paris by Herschel Grynszpan, a 17-year-old Polish Jewish teenager, just days before as an excuse to start the violence.

- More than 1,400 synagogues were burned or damaged.
- Jewish-owned businesses, homes, and cemeteries were vandalized or looted.
- Fire brigades were ordered not to extinguish fires unless nearby non-Jewish property was threatened.
- Jewish religious objects — including Torah scrolls, prayer books, and ritual garments — were desecrated.
- Approximately 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to concentration camps such as Buchenwald, Dachau, and Sachsenhausen.
- At least 91 Jews were killed, and countless others were beaten, humiliated, and forced into degrading acts in public.

Afterwards, the Nazi regime fined the Jewish community 1 billion Reichsmarks, denied them insurance coverage, and forced them to pay for the damages. It became known as **Kristallnacht**, or the "**Night of Broken Glass**," because shards of glass from shattered windows of synagogues, shops, and homes littered the streets.

Today, it is referred to as the **November Pogrom**, a term that better captures the organized and widespread nature of the attacks.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The November Pogrom marked an important turning point.

- Nazi persecution of Jews escalated from anti-Jewish laws and discrimination to open, state-sponsored violence.
- The attacks signaled to Jews in Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland that they were no longer safe or welcome in their own communities.
- It received widespread international coverage, including headlines in the United States.
- President Franklin D. Roosevelt condemned the violence, but most nations (including the U.S.) failed to change immigration policies to admit more Jewish refugees.

KEY TERMS

Concentration Camp	Established by the Nazis to incarcerate and terrorize political opponents and perceived enemies of the state, including Jews and other minority groups.
Pogrom	Violent attack on Jews by the local non-Jewish population.
Synagogue	In Judaism, a house of worship and learning.
Torah	The most sacred text in Judaism, made up of the first five books of the Hebrew bible. It is often by hand on a scroll and read aloud in the synagogue during services.

MAP

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

PHOTOGRAPHS

Jewish-owned store front destroyed during the November Pogrom in Berlin, Germany.
(Source: National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD)

Herzog Rudolfstrasse synagogue after it was destroyed during the November Pogrom in Munich, Germany.
(Source: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München)

Onlookers watch as a synagogue in Oberramstadt burns.
(Source: US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Trudy Isenberg)

Jewish men arrested after the November Pogrom. They were forced to walk through the streets of Baden Baden with a sign reading, "God does not forgive us."
(Source: Yad Vashem)

LOCAL CONNECTION

Holocaust Survivor: Rita Kaplan

Rita Kaplan was born on April 14, 1924 in Memmelsdorf, Germany. She was 14 years old when the November Pogrom took place in 1938. In her testimony, she recalls witnessing the destruction of Jewish homes and synagogues and the fear that spread through her community.

Scan the QR code or **access the link here** to hear Rita share her memories.

Source: Salem State University, Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Holocaust and Genocide Oral Testimonies

Newspaper Headline: The Boston Globe November 10, 1938

Boston residents read headlines like this one in the aftermath of the November Pogrom.

Although President Roosevelt condemned the attacks, the U.S. and other nations failed to open their doors to Jewish refugees.

Worst Wave of Anti-Jew Violence Since Hitler Came to Power

BERLIN, Nov. 10 (A. P.)—Nazi Germany today indulged in its greatest wave of anti-Jewish violence since Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933.

As a national day of vengeance for the assassination of a German diplomat by a Jew in Paris wore on reports from every section of the country told of the burning and dynamiting of synagogues and demolition and looting of Jewish shops.

The reports indicated that the campaign was conducted with a thoroughness and precision that left little to chance.

Only after more than 12 hours of nation-wide violence did Propaganda Minister Paul Joseph Goebbels call a halt in a brief appeal to the people to desist from further demonstrations.

But his appeal concluded with what responsible Jews feared might be a threat of a general order for all Jews to leave the country.

Late in the afternoon, Goebbels' appeal had had no apparent effect in the West End of Berlin.

Wrecking gangs systematically toured that section's main thoroughfare, Kurfuerstandamm, pulling down hurriedly constructed protections in front of show win-

Jews

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CLASSROOM DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Analyze the photographs on page 3. Describe what you notice first, then look for smaller details in the background. What do these images tell you about what happened during the November Pogrom?

2. What details from Rita's testimony stand out to you and why?

3. How do headlines like the Boston Globe's shape what Americans knew at the time?

4. If you read this headline in 1938, what questions might you have?

5. What options did Americans have to respond to what they read in the news?

6. How does each source (the photographs, the survivor's testimony, and the newspaper headline) show a different perspective on the November Pogrom? What do you learn from looking at all three together?