

## Memories of *Kristallnacht*: The Last *Bar Mitzvah*

### GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS

This is one of two resources on the topic of *Kristallnacht* and one of 20 about the Holocaust and Wales.

It explores Julius Weil's account of his *Bar Mitzvah*, the last to take place in the Glockengasse Synagogue, in Köln (Cologne), Germany, before it was destroyed during *Kristallnacht*.

**Ages:** 9-14.

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE RESOURCE

Learning about the Holocaust through local examples allows learners to **discover their heritage** and **develop a sense of place and cynefin**. It also removes the idea of 'otherness' – that this happened to other people in another place and time – and instead, **creates feelings of connection and empathy**.

#### 2. LEARNING AIMS

The aim of the resource is to enable learners to:

1. Explore past and contemporary ethical and moral issues and engage with concepts of prejudice, discrimination, antisemitism, extremism, equality, tolerance, humanity, responsibility, good and evil, make a connection between past and present issues, and consider what is happening locally and globally today.
2. Develop critical and reflective thinking.
3. Explore and develop creative and artistic skills.
4. Develop confidence, resilience, and empathy: To become more aware of their own experiences and feelings when engaging in activities with others, and to recognise that other people have experiences and feelings.
5. Become responsible citizens in Wales and the wider world.

#### 3. FOCUS OF THE RESOURCE

1. Critically reviewing how past and contemporary events are perceived, interpreted, and represented; forming their own viewpoint and developing self-awareness.
2. Critically analysing and evaluating evidence; interpreting and synthesising information; drawing informed conclusions about the world, its past, present and future.
3. Expressing ideas and emotions through art.

4. Learning about the complexity and diversity of human societies (e.g., values, social norms, rituals, and faiths) and the impact of actions and beliefs.
5. Developing an understanding of challenges and opportunities in their personal lives and wider society and considering how to respond ethically.

#### 4. WHAT SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND EXPERIENCE THE RESOURCE HELPS DEVELOP

Indicators of learning:

1. Knowledge and understanding about *Kristallnacht* (e.g., what it was, why it happened, and who was targeted) and its connection to Wales (e.g., child refugees coming to Wales).
2. Knowledge and understanding of Jewish culture and beliefs.
3. Ability to find, critically evaluate, and use different sources (e.g., oral histories and artwork) to form and express their own views, opinions, knowledge, and understanding.
4. Ability to respond to and reflect on a historical event with creativity using inspiration and imagination.
5. Experience of participating in art as both a creator and an audience.
6. Understanding of ethical and moral concepts, e.g., discrimination, racism, antisemitism, and the importance of democratic values and human rights.
7. Ability to make a connection between past and contemporary discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and religion and consider what is happening today in Wales, the UK, and the world, e.g., refugees coming to the UK/Wales.
8. Understanding that people have different beliefs, values, and experiences and respecting the needs and rights of others.
9. Ability to work as part of a team.
10. Experience of participating in group discussions and tasks.
11. Becoming more aware of their own experiences and feelings, values, and beliefs and being able to communicate them.
12. Developing empathy for other people and their circumstances/challenges they face(d), e.g., children who came to the UK on Kindertransport, or modern-day refugees.

#### 5. HOW THE RESOURCE SUPPORTS LEARNING IN LOCAL (CYNEFIN), NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL CONTEXTS

This resource allows learners to hear the stories of people who were directly affected by the Holocaust and who lived in Wales. These are the stories of people who contributed to and were part of their local Welsh communities. They settled and had families here and their history is part of the story of Wales.

These local examples can help learners understand the connection between Welsh history and global events like World War Two and the Holocaust.

## 6. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Information about *Kristallnacht*:

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. This resource explores Julius Weil's recollections of this devastating event. Julius came to the UK on a Kindertransport in 1938; he first lived in England and then in Wales. Julius died in Cardiff in 2021.

### Overview:

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 World War Two.

## 7. IDEAS and QUESTIONS

1. This resource can be used to explore how the Holocaust is presented in art.

It should be made clear that art depicting the Holocaust need not be graphic or harrowing to look at; symbolism can be used to portray these devastating events.

Questions:

- How can the Holocaust be depicted in art?
- What does it mean to use symbolism to portray the Holocaust events?

2. The resource can be used to promote critical and reflective thinking (**learning aim 2**).

Critical thinking: It encourages learners to ask questions, evaluate information critically, and engage in meaningful discussion.

Reflective thinking: It encourages learners to analyse the information and make judgements about what has happened.

Questions:

- How do learners feel about creating an artwork?
- What is the impact of artwork on learners both as creators and audience?

3. The resource can be used to explore different art mediums and encourage learners' creativity.

Learners create an installation artwork that captures the story of 'the last *Bar Mitzvah*' and the aftermath of the violent destruction of synagogues during *Kristallnacht*.

### What is an installation artwork?

An installation artwork is a 3D piece of art in a space that can be constructed from a variety of materials. It can sometimes bring together art and performance.

Although not absolutely necessary, this activity would benefit from learners having access to a **drama studio** with a lighting rig. If you do not have access to a black box drama studio, you can have areas in the classroom laid out for each group with some black fabric, card, or paper to create the 'black box' in which the learners can create their installations. Lamps or torches can be used to emulate a lighting rig.

You will also need to collect a range of simple objects and/or art materials for the learners to use. Example props and materials might include different coloured paper, mock 'broken glass pieces' (safe to use and available as an art supply), paints, and items of clothing (e.g., a party outfit).

Learners should be given around 20 minutes to complete the activity. The task may be extended, if timing allows, to create bigger and more detailed installations. For example, learners could plan their installation in the first lesson and their homework task could be to prepare items for sharing in the next lesson. This might allow for greater choice and ownership.

Save enough time to allow learners to view all created installations.

You may wish to photograph the artwork for display.

4. The resource can be used:

- To explore and recognise the experiences and feelings of people who were persecuted by the Nazis.
- To enable learners to become more aware of their own experiences and feelings and to develop confidence, resilience, and empathy.

Questions:

- What did Julius Weil experience? How did he feel?

5. The resource can be used to explore the significance of the Jewish ritual of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* and discuss the importance of similar ceremonies in other faiths/cultures, e.g., baptism, confirmation, wedding, graduation, funeral, Hajj and other ceremonies and events that learners and/or their families have been part of (**learning aim 4**).

Questions:

- What is the significance of rituals and ceremonies?
- How do beliefs, rituals, values, and social norms/practices impact learners' decisions and actions? How can they help them to act responsibly and ethically?

If you have Jewish learners in your class, you may wish to encourage them to share their own experiences.

## 8. RESEARCH AND FURTHER INFORMATION

### 1. Introduction to teaching and learning about the Holocaust:

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) [Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust](#) provide information on why, what, and how to teach about the Holocaust.

The Holocaust Educational Trust's worksheet '[Defining the Holocaust](#)' may be used to introduce learners to the topic of the Holocaust; it helps learners to think about how the Holocaust is defined and why the issue of definition is important.

## 2. Further reading:

*Kristallnacht:*

- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Encyclopaedia:
  - [Who were the victims?](#)
  - [Anti-Jewish legislation in pre-war Germany: 1937-1938.](#)
  - [Antisemitic legislation 1933-1939.](#)

Glockengasse Synagogue, Köln (Cologne), Germany:

- The Life of the Synagogue: [Glockengasse Synagogue, Cologne.](#)
- Wikipedia: [Glockengasse Synagogue.](#)

Jews in Köln (Cologne):

- NS Documentation Centre of the City of Cologne: [The Jewish fate.](#)

*Bar and Bat Mitzvah:*

- Jewish Virtual Library: [Jewish Practices & Rituals: Bar/Bat Mitzvah.](#)
- My Jewish Learning: [Bar and Bat Mitzvah 101.](#)

Installation art:

- Tate: [Installation Art.](#)
- [What is Installation Art – Definition, Examples & Artists.](#)

## 3. A list of 20 resources about [the Holocaust and Wales:](#)

- [Kindertransport 1: Jewish Life in Central Europe before the Second World War.](#)
- [Kindertransport 2: The Journey to Britain.](#)
- [Kindertransport 3: Arrival in Wales.](#)
- [Kindertransport 4: Life in Wales.](#)
- [Memories of Kristallnacht: Destruction and Flight.](#)
- [Memories of Kristallnacht: The Last Bar Mitzvah.](#)
- [Jewish Artists in Wales: Josef Herman.](#)
- [Jewish Artists in Wales: Heinz Koppel.](#)
- [Aero Zipp Fasteners at Treforest Trading Estate.](#)
- [General Paper and Box Manufacturing Company at Treforest Trading Estate.](#)
- ['Enemy Aliens' and Internment Camps.](#)

- ['Enemy Aliens' and Human Rights.](#)
- [Jewish Refugees as Domestic Servants.](#)
- [Jewish Refugee Doctors, Dentists, and Nurses in Wales.](#)
- [Jewish Refugees in the British Army during the Second World War.](#)
- [Religious Life of Jewish Refugees in Wales.](#)
- [The Welsh Language.](#)
- [Liberation.](#)
- [Identity.](#)
- [Remembering the Holocaust.](#)