

HCPGH TOOLKIT:

Benno and the Night of Broken Glass



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We recommend using Hoopla to stream the Dreamscape Read-Along version of Benno and the Night of Broken Glass. You can access free streaming through Hoopla as a member of the Carnegie Libraries! All you need is a library card to log in! For assistance, please visit www.hoopladigital.com or call your local Carnegie Library Branch for Information Services. The lesson below will be time-stamped to the hoopla version. The physical copy of this book can also be borrowed from your local library, as well as purchased [online](#).

**This lesson is adaptable for teachers and parents, and it is appropriate for students aged 6-12.*

Vocabulary: Be sure to reinforce new vocabulary and literacy skills by stopping to understand the following terms as you encounter them. These are also time-stamped to the hoopla read-along.

- **Rosenstrasse (0:30):** the name of the street where Benno lives; in German it means “Street of Roses”
- **Berlin (0:30):** the capital city of Germany
- **Hausmeister (0:46; 6:00):** German for Caretaker or Property Manager
- **Sabbath (1:03):** a day of religious observance and rest, kept by Jewish people from Friday evening to Saturday evening, and by most Christians on Sunday.
- **Schnitzel (1:32):** a traditional German food, consisting of meat coated in breadcrumbs and fried
- **Herr (1:38):** German for Mr.
- **Guten morgen (1:52):** German for “Good Morning”
- **Strolled (2:00):** walked in a leisurely or relaxed way
- **Frau (2:08):** German for Mrs.
- **Bolts (of fabric) (2:17):** a unit of measurement for cloth, typically stored in a roll.
- **Strutted (4:45):** walked with a stiff and apparently arrogant or proud manner.
- **Cowered (5:15):** crouched down in fear
- **Swarm (5:20):** to move somewhere in a large or dense group (like a swarm of angry bees)
- **Smoldering (6:54):** burning slowly with smoke but no flames
- **Gilded (7:06):** covered thinly with gold leaf or gold paint

Additional Terms:

- **Pogrom:** a Russian word meaning “to wreak havoc, to demolish violently.” Historically, the term refers to violent attacks by local non-Jewish populations on Jews in the Russian Empire and in other countries. Kristallnacht is otherwise known as the November Pogroms. (USHMM)
- **Kristallnacht:** On November 9–10, 1938, Nazi leaders unleashed a series of pogroms against the Jewish population in Germany and recently incorporated territories. This event came to be called 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. (USHMM)

ONTEXTUAL CONCEPTS TO REVIEW

This section is meant to be used as a guide for parents and teachers to discuss themes and concepts in the book, both in words and in pictures. This is not meant to be read directly to children, but rather it is meant to guide your reading comprehension questions and discussions.

Jewish Concepts

A. Neue Synagogue (0:37; 5:42; 7:06)

1. In the back of the physical copy of this book, you will see a picture of the Neue Synagogue. It is important to view photos of this synagogue prior to and after Kristallnacht, as well as its reconstruction today. Below, you will find such photos in our supplemental resources.

2. Significance of the synagogue’s name: in German, “Neue Synagogue” means “the New Synagogue.” It was the largest synagogue in Berlin in November 1938. It still exists today as a museum, where visitors can see the synagogue’s dome. For child’s reference, a synagogue is a Jewish house of worship.

B. Moshe the butcher (2:04)

1. For students who are unfamiliar with the term **Kosher**, it is important to review its meaning. According to the Jewish religious laws of “Kashrut,” Jews are not permitted to

eat or mix certain foods: for example, they must not mix milk and meat, and they do not eat certain animals, such as pork. Also, they must slaughter their meats in a very particular way, as well as salt their meats to remove the animal's blood. Kosher foods are those deemed acceptable to eat in accordance with these laws.

2. Significance of kosher butcher in Berlin: The fact that a kosher butcher shop existed in Berlin shows us that there was a large Jewish population in the city, and that prior to Kristallnacht Jews were allowed to practice the everyday observances of their religion. When the butcher shop is destroyed, there is no longer a way for Jews to observe this important aspect of their daily lives.

C. **Shabbat traditions (1:00)**: It is important to pay attention to Shabbat with the Adler Family, as it is foregrounding for understanding Benno's experience of Kristallnacht, as well as helping children understand Jewish tradition.

1. **Challah (1:06)**: a braided loaf of bread traditionally eaten by Jews as part of Sabbath ritual at meals.

2. **Sophie's Songbook** and how it is held (1:08) – In the picture, Sophie is holding a "bentcher" or blessing book, commonly used on the sabbath to sing songs of praise and blessings before and after eating (at minute 6:38 – Sophie's songbook is referenced is destroyed on Kristallnacht, symbolic of the coming fate of the Jewish people).

3. **Sabbath candles (1:03)** – On Friday evenings at sundown, Jewish women light candles and say a special blessing to signify the beginning of the sabbath.

D. **Professor Goldfarb and his books (2:42)**: It is mentioned more than once in the book that Prof. Goldfarb is troubled and feels he must "protect" and "save the books" (**3:47 and 6:10**) This alludes to the Nazi's desire to destroy all Jewish books, religious and secular, which the "brown shirts" burned on the night of Kristallnacht.

E. **Torah Scrolls (5:46)**: In Judaism, the Torah is the law of God as revealed to Moses and recorded in the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures (the Pentateuch), otherwise known as the Five Books of Moses. A Torah is written by a scribe on parchment scrolls, and it is kept in the synagogue to be read publicly on the Sabbath before a congregation. On the night of Kristallnacht, many Torah scrolls across Europe were destroyed by fires, desecrated in the streets as a public display of hatred.

Historical Concepts

This section is mainly geared toward teachers who wish to provide historical context, using the Afterword section in the back of the hard copy book, as well as with other resources. However, Parents are more than welcome to provide further context, based on their child's age. We recommend supplemental information for students in grades 5-8.

A. **Kristallnacht (5:04) – The Night of Broken Glass** (the element of broken glass is reiterated when the author mention's Benno's paws are cut on pieces of glass everywhere **(at minute 7:00)**). If you would like to provide further information about how Kristallnacht came to be, we encourage you to visit the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's online Holocaust Encyclopedia, where students can learn more through the museum's photo archive and artifacts.

B. **Use of the Afterword:** How much background you decide to give for your students depends on their age. With older students (grades 5-8), we recommend supplementing the Afterword with further resources and information. You can find suggestions in the last section of this guide.

C. **Rosenstrasse** – the author's decision to use this particular street name is significant, as it alludes to The Rosenstrasse Demonstration of 1943. You can learn more about this non-violent protest of non Jewish Germans who wished to save their Jewish neighbors, spouses, and children of mixed marriages – please visit: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-rosenstrasse-demonstration-1943>

D. **Brown Shirts (3:30; 4:45; 5:19; 6:00)** – Brown Shirts are another way of describing the German Nazi Storm Troopers, otherwise known as the Sturmabteilung (German: "Assault Division", abbreviated as S.A.). They were known as by the German words Sturmtruppen (Storm Troopers) or Braunhemden (Brown Shirts).

Author's and Artist's Purposes

A. **Goldfarb's protection of the books, and the book burnings (3:47; 6:08; 6:27)** – These are especially important to understanding a key motivation within the events of Kristallnacht. The Nazi Party encouraged looters to throw Jewish books into the streets to be set aflame, and this served the following purposes: it was meant not only to hurt the Jews who owned these books, but also to send a message that Jewish religious and intellectual legacies should be deemed inferior, and thereby be erased from history. The author alludes to the massive numbers of

Jewish books that were burned on Kristallnacht and henceforward, through the character of a Jewish intellectual, Prof. Goldfarb, and his need to preserve Jewish life and history.

B. Point of View – the character or narrator’s position in relation to the story being told; otherwise, what THEY can see and experience in the story. Educators may choose to point out that the point of view of this story is that of Benno the cat – he is an innocent observer and friend to all, and he shows no favoritism toward other characters in the story. He purely watches and feels the world around him changing, and readers experience that change alongside Benno, except with added context. Educators may also choose not to tell their students directly, rather prompting them with the following questions to lead into a discussion:

1. Why is understanding the point of view important to understanding the story?
2. How does Point of View impact the reader’s experience?

C. Illustrations: The illustrator uses Benno’s point of view to express his fear and confusion using shoes. He depicts the people walking on Rosenstrasse, showing readers what Benno would see at his level (4:38 – 4:52), and we can see the Brown Shirts’ “heavy black boots” with their rigid and sharp soles. This is another way that the book communicates the changing atmosphere of the neighborhood, not only factually, but also emotionally.

Literary Analysis: Questions and Themes for Open Discussion

A. Point of view (as in Author’s purpose): Why did the author choose Benno the cat as our main character? What does his point of view teach us and how does it enrich the story?

B. Significance of the setting: It is important for teachers/parents to connect the setting (Berlin, Germany on Rosenstrasse in 1938) with historical background. Depending on students’ ages, you may wish to point out that not all Jews are the same – Benno’s Jewish friends represent assimilated Jewish life in the city of Berlin, which is not the same as those living a rural Jewish life in the shtetl, or small Jewish village/town.

C. Symbolism of “eyes lowered” (4:58):

Questions to pose to children: Why is it important that Benno notices the behavior of neighbors and shop keeper? Why do they lower their eyes? What are they pretending not to see? What might they be afraid of?

Here, the author alludes to the intimidation citizens may have felt in the presence of the paramilitary Brown Shirts, as well as the non-Jewish German citizens decision to ignore what was happening around them (i.e. the change in their government, the hatred that began to grow, and the damage that was about to ensue).

D. Role of the Hausmeister: The Hausmeister treats Benno very well in the story, giving him a warm place to sleep and always milk to drink. However, while the Hausmeister treats Benno, a cat, with care and kindness, he does not treat his Jewish residents the same way. The Hausmeister directs the Nazis directly to the apartments of his Jewish tenants in minute 6:00, depicting a common betrayal. What does this tell us about average people who may have been in the Hausmeister's place?

E. Use of vocabulary to set mood (i.e. strolled, eyes lowered): How does the author use vocabulary to communicate a general feeling or sense? How does she use vocabulary to communicate the way Benno feels, as well as the emotions he picks up from his acquaintances?

F: **"...comforting sounds of the people above" (3:03) ... "Then things began to change" (3:09):** Benno notices and feels the shifting tone in his neighborhood. Educators may choose to site this list of instances when Benno witnesses significant changes in the people and places around him, changes which add depth to understanding how Kristallnacht happened:

- The changes in the neighborhood characters, Jewish and non-Jewish behavior changes - The changes in Sophie and Inge (from similar to different/separate)
- 4:43 – "...but the people were no longer friendly"
- Jewish stores destroyed – Herr Gerber's Store untouched (5:52)
- Jewish homes ransacked – Schmidts' apartment untouched (6:36)
- Mitzi Stein sweeps up glass in storefront – Herr Gerber, business as usual (7:20) - (7:20-7:29) – the Jews disappear from Benno's life (7:50 – "life on Rosenstrasse would never be the same")

Supplemental Resources (age appropriate)

A. Photos – we recommend that educators of grades 5-8 use historical photographs to contextualize students' understanding of Jewish life (before and during the war) and the events

leading up to the Holocaust. Here are some suggested items, with corresponding links to USHMM Photo Archives:

1. Book burnings: [Photo of Nazi book burning](#); [Article about the book burnings](#); [Photo specific to book burnings in Berlin, Germany](#). More articles and photos can be found [here](#).

2. Shabbat (Hebrew for Sabbath) prayer service – please know that very few photographs of war era sabbath services exist: [Photo of Shabbat Morning Service in Pithiviers Camp Barracks](#) (France); a simple google search of [“shabbat service”](#) will show you modern examples of Reconstructionist, Reform, and Conservative Shabbat services. For information about what a Shabbat morning service is like, we like this article: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/what-to-expect-at-synagogue-services-on-saturday-morning/>. Since Orthodox Jewish law prevents photography on the Sabbath, such photos are not easily available. However, Orthodox Jews pray multiple times per day, and those services often look similar. For context, we suggest you explore on YouTube, and we recommend the following snippet of a men’s weekday morning service (men and women pray separately in a group), where students will see men praying with a traditional “tallit” or prayer shawl, as well as “Tefillin” or phylacteries: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vpKoj8a93s>

3. Neue Synagogue: [Images of the Neue Synagogue today](#); [Interior images of this synagogue](#); [Image of the Neue Synagogue on Kristallnacht](#).

4. Kristallnacht: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/kristallnacht> (USHMM) - we also recommend [Facing History and Ourselves](#), [Echoes and Reflections](#), and [Yad Vashem photos/articles](#).

5. Images of pre-war Jewish life: we recommend showing your students what pre-war Jewish life looked like, to give them a sense of what was truly lost, as well as to show the diversity among Jewish people – not all Jews dress and observe rituals in the same way (or at all). It is important to see the apparel of assimilated Jewish people versus those who lived in the shtetl (small rural villages). We also suggest, if you have the time, to discuss the thriving Jewish culture(s) that existed prior to the war, in Literature and Art, in Science and Math, as well as in the diversity of Jewish religious dynasties (many of which were permanently decimated). Here are some suggested links (*please note, we recommend that you supervise your students’/child’s independent exploration of photo archives):

-<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/gallery/pre-war-jewish-life-eastern-europe>

-<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/gallery/pre-war-jewish-life-europe>

-<https://www.ushmm.org/collections/the-museums-collections/collections-highlights/vishniac-collection> (The Roman Vishniac Photography Collection)

- <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jewish-life-in-europe-before-the-holocaust> (Article with photos of pre-war Jewish life in the USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia)

- <https://photos.yadvashem.org/> (The Yad Vashem Photo Archive)

- www.yivo.org (The YIVO Institute, a great source for Jewish pre-war/Yiddish/Holocaust/post war life)

B. Testimonies from Echoes & Reflections: Please visit the [Echoes and Reflections website](#) and search for the themes/testimonies in relation to the following themes and related questions in Benno and the Night of Broken Glass. The [E&R Video Toolbox](#) is very helpful! If you would like to be connected to a local Echoes and Reflections Teacher Fellow, please let us know: 412-421-1500.

1. Jewish experience versus bystander experience/behavior
2. Jewish versus non-Jewish experience (Adlers versus Schmidts; butcher versus the grocer)
3. How did relationships change?
4. Pre-war life versus post-Kristallnacht life

C. **Survivor Testimonies:** We highly recommend that educators and parents of older children use survivor testimonies to teach about Kristallnacht, WWII and the Holocaust. [The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#), [Yad Vashem](#), [Facing History and Ourselves](#), the [USC Shoah Foundation](#), and [Echoes and Reflections](#) are all great resources (each link in this sentence takes you to testimonies)! The Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh also has a collection of local survivor testimonies and stories, which you can access here: <https://hcofpgh.org/the-holocaust-testimony-project/>. You can also access our other [digital resources](#) and [stories of local survivors](#) at our [main site](#).

Inviting a Speaker to your Classroom!

A note about **Lynne Ravas**: Lynne Ravas as an exemplary educator, retired after many years of teaching English Language Arts to middle schoolers across the country. She serves as one of our most beloved volunteers, primarily as a [Generations Speaker](#), teaching local students and our community about the Holocaust, Kristallnacht, and her family's story. She is also a teacher fellow through Echoes and Reflections, training educators in our region and beyond on how to effectively teach the Holocaust today. If you would like to schedule a powerful virtual presentation with Lynne for your classroom, please reach out to us! You may contact Christina Sahovey, Holocaust Center Operations Manager and Generations Speaker Series coordinator, at csahovey@hcpgh.org. You can also call us at **412-421-1500**. Please do not hesitate to reach out for assistance with any of your curriculum needs!

Activities

Graphic Organizer Activity (attached below) for families and students:

Below you will find the Benno Graphic Organizer: Benno Inside and Out. If you choose to use this exercise, please print and pass out to your students (or for your child) to complete either as they read/listen, or during their literacy group reading/discussion. Instruct children that they should write outside of Benno's cat silhouette the things that are happening around him – things which affect his inner feelings and experience. They should then write inside the cat silhouette those inner feelings and experiences of Benno. Afterwards, review with your child or student(s) how the events happening outside of Benno are affecting how he may feel inside or experience the world around him. Why and how are those outer changes affect him inside? You may also draw from the illustrations how Benno might be feeling, and how this relates to how the people in his life are feeling. This activity is appropriate for ages 8-12. Use this activity as a springboard to discuss what you can learn about Kristallnacht and the Holocaust from Benno's witnessing the people and changes in society around him.

- We recommend the following additional resource for educators who are interested in using Benno and the Night of Broken Glass in their ELA/Library classrooms:

https://www.karben.com/assets/images/eSources/eSource_Benno.pdf

- PLEASE SEE BENNO GRAPHIC ORGANIZER ON NEXT PAGE →

(1) Graphic Organizer: Benno Inside and Out

