A Public Turning Point

Tracing how Kristallnacht changed Nazi persecution of Jews

TOT.C.5.4 "Analyze the effects of Kristallnacht and how it became a watershed event in the transition from targeted persecution to open, public violence against Jews."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Number details about persecution before Kristallnacht with 1, attacks during it with 2, and consequences afterward with 3. Circle details that show how the government enabled or extended the violence.

Before, During, and After Kristallnacht

1 Before November 1938, Nazi Germany had already stripped Jews of rights and livelihoods. A 1933 boycott targeted Jewish businesses, and the 1935 Nuremberg Laws denied Jews citizenship and banned marriages between Jews and people classified as German. Antisemitic attacks also occurred before 1938, so violence did not begin with Kristallnacht. Yet much persecution had been carried out through laws, official orders, and economic pressure. On November 7, a Jewish teenager shot a German diplomat in Paris. Nazi leaders used the diplomat's death two days later as a pretext for attacks they encouraged and coordinated across Germany and annexed Austria.

2 On the night of November 9 and into November 10, 1938, mobs burned synagogues, shattered shop windows, and wrecked Jewish homes and businesses. Nazi Party members and supporters carried out attacks in full public view. Police were told not to stop attacks on Jewish people or property, while firefighters often protected nearby buildings rather than burning synagogues. Many neighbors could see the smoke or broken glass. The name Kristallnacht, or "Night of Broken Glass," refers to the shattered windows, but it can hide the terror inflicted on people. At least 91 Jews were killed during the attacks, and many were injured.

3 Afterward, the Nazi government arrested about 30,000 Jewish men and sent them to concentration camps. It also forced the Jewish community to pay a huge fine and imposed new limits on Jewish work and public life. The government blamed Jews for the destruction it had helped cause. These measures turned public violence into further official punishment, leaving many families desperate to flee, though other countries often restricted entry. Kristallnacht was a watershed not because persecution suddenly began, but because coordinated attacks made violence against Jews unmistakably public and were followed by harsher state action. It marked a dangerous escalation, not the start of the Holocaust's later mass murder.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the attacks of Kristallnacht differ from the earlier forms of persecution described in the passage?

2. What details show that the attacks were both public and enabled by the authorities?

3. How did the Nazi government extend the harm after the attacks ended?

4. Why is it inaccurate to say that violence against Jews began on Kristallnacht, even though the event was a watershed?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 65 to 85 word museum label for an exhibit about Kristallnacht. Explain the change from persecution before the attacks to what followed them, use at least two specific details from the passage, and correct the mistaken idea that violence against Jews began that night.

ANSWER KEY

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Number details about persecution before Kristallnacht with 1, attacks during it with 2, and consequences afterward with 3. Circle details that show how the government enabled or extended the violence. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the attacks of Kristallnacht differ from the earlier forms of persecution described in the passage?	**Earlier persecution often used laws, orders, and economic pressure. Kristallnacht brought coordinated attacks on Jewish people, synagogues, homes, and businesses into public view.**
2	What details show that the attacks were both public and enabled by the authorities?	**Neighbors could see smoke and broken glass, while police were told not to stop attacks on Jewish people or property.**
3	How did the Nazi government extend the harm after the attacks ended?	**It sent about 30,000 Jewish men to concentration camps, forced the Jewish community to pay a huge fine, and imposed new limits on work and public life.**
4	Why is it inaccurate to say that violence against Jews began on Kristallnacht, even though the event was a watershed?	**Antisemitic attacks had occurred earlier. Kristallnacht marked an escalation because the attacks were coordinated, openly visible, and followed by harsher state action.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Long before Kristallnacht, Nazi laws had taken away Jewish rights, and antisemitic attacks had occurred. On November 9 and 10, 1938, synagogues burned in public while police were told not to intervene. After the attacks, the government sent about 30,000 Jewish men to concentration camps and imposed a huge fine. The night did not start violence against Jews. It exposed a sharp escalation from discrimination to coordinated public attacks and further state punishment.

Accept responses that identify earlier violence as well as the shift to coordinated, public attacks and harsher government action. Students need not use the word "watershed" if they explain the change accurately.