
Being German and Jewish

Living in hope in uncertain times

A case study for online teaching the Holocaust over five 30 minute lessons

Notes for teachers

Adapted from the classroom material 'Life in Plauen'

Key Question: What can we learn from the case study of Plauen?

Teaching Aims & Learning Objectives

- Develop knowledge and understanding of Jewish life in Europe before the war
- Analyse the experiences of Jews and non-Jews in the city of Plauen
- To reflect on what Plauen reveals about Germany before and after 1933

Rationale

In a few short years the Nazi regime and its collaborators destroyed Jewish life and communities that had been present in some European countries for over 2000 years. Reflecting on this long history helps students to grasp the voids created by the genocide.

This material seeks to expand knowledge and understanding of Jewish life in Europe before the war through exploration of the city of Plauen. A city where the Jewish community enjoyed a long and rich history, the fortunes of Plauen's Jews from the late nineteenth century through the first decades of the twentieth provides a fascinating case study into Jewish and non-Jewish relations during this period and the complexities that arise from communities living alongside one another.

Key Information

- The material is intended for Year 9 students and above.
- It has been adapted for remote learning.
- The material comprises five 30 minute lesson sessions with accompanying resources:
 - PowerPoint slide show 'Exploring the synagogue'
 - Task cards
 - Photo cards
 - Creating a complete picture: further information card
- Students will need paper and writing materials as well as a PC and internet access

Lesson 1: Finding out about Plauen and its people

Introduction

Explain to students that over the next five lessons they are going to be learning about Jewish life in Europe before the Second World War with a focus on the city of Plauen as a case study.

Check students' knowledge of the size and characteristics of the Jewish population in Germany prior to the Second World War. Ensure they know this was a very small percentage (less than 0.75% of the population were Jewish) and the Jews of Germany were much assimilated.

Share Task Card 1

Share Photo Cards 1-3.

Ask students to create a timeline and construct a chronology of events from 1870-1939 using the available information. The purpose of the timeline is to position Plauen within its historical context and to reflect on a small reform Jewish community who are going about their everyday lives and planning for the future. They will return to the timeline throughout the lessons.

Ask students to note down answers to these questions on Task Card 1.

- What do you know about the city of Plauen?
- What do you know of the Jewish community there?
- What other events in Germany were happening?
- Can you draw any conclusions about how the First World War relates to the decline of the Jewish and non-Jewish population?
- How important is the changing political and economic situation for life in Plauen?

Ask students to ponder a final question for next time:

- Are there any events on the timeline you find strange? You might want to hint at the building of the synagogue for them to ponder. In the following lessons it will be important to draw attention to the construction of the synagogue during a period of economic and political instability.

Lesson 2: Investigating the synagogue

In this lesson students will focus on the construction of the synagogue and why it was built.

Firstly, you might like to direct students to this [animation](#) for information about synagogues.

Highlight to students that a synagogue is not solely about its layout and what it houses. For many Jews it is a spiritual place of peace – a sacred space for prayer and praise to God.

Share Task Card 2: The synagogue.

Ask students to look at the photograph and answer the initial questions.

Look at the outside of the building:

- Can you see any evidence that this is a Jewish building used by the Jewish community?
- The building is divided into two colours – why do you think this is?
- Look at the design, is this similar or different to other religious buildings you have seen?
- If you were to cover up the Jewish symbol what might you think this building was used for?

Ask students to share their initial answers.

Share the images: Exploring the synagogue.

Having looked at the images, ask students

- Is there anything that stands out or that you notice?
- What words would you use to describe the architecture?
- What reasons can you think of to explain why the Jewish community may have had this building designed and built?

The synagogue was built between 1928-1930. Make sure these dates are added to your students' timelines.

Remind students that although built by local Jewish people, this building was also used by non-Jewish people in Plauen. It was paid for by selling a building in the centre of Plauen and fundraising by Jews and non-Jews over several years. Encourage them to think about this Reform Jewish community as being made up of German citizens. Ask students to consider the role of community buildings. You might want to spend some time talking about how community buildings are a physical manifestation of community values and an expression of community relations.

Ask students for their thoughts on the style of the building. Centre discussion on the history of the building and why it was built, rather than the religious aspects of the building (though these themes may be of interest too). Ask why the Jewish community may have chosen such modern architecture.

Lesson 3: Adding further information

In this lesson highlight to students the need to add further detail to their understanding of Plauen.

Share Creating a complete picture: further information

Share Task Card 3: Adding further information

Ask students to add any new information to their timeline,

Ask them to summarise in a brief paragraph how this new information helps to develop their understanding of events in Plauen.

Ask students to feedback.

Be sure students don't make the mistake of concluding the non-Jews of Plauen somehow "became" Nazis. Note the split of the electoral vote, and remind students that people did not necessarily vote for the NSDAP in 1933 simply because of the Party's antisemitism: this was the case with some, but for others it was more complex.

Suggest the synagogue was built by the community to show a commitment to Germany and that the Jewish community were loyal German citizens who played a role in the town. It was also meant to be a communal building.

Remind students they have looked at a whole community, but ask them to ponder for next lesson what they feel they have missed so far. It will be important next lesson to highlight that they have not yet learnt about any individuals.

Lesson 4: People who lived in Plauen

This lesson focuses on people who lived in Plauen, among them, the Klipsteins, the Dingfelders and Dr Isidore Goldberg.

Share Photo Cards 4a and 4b.

Some information is given about the families on these cards, together with a web address where more details can be found.

Ask students to explore the families further and write brief histories of these two families.

Share Task Card 4.

Ask students to find out what happened to Plauen synagogue.

Ask students to find out what happened to Dr Isidore Goldberg (he was murdered during the Holocaust).

Ask students to add any further information to their timeline.

If students are learning about the November Pogrom of 1938 (*Kristallnacht*) for the first time, you might want to explain the events that took place. This [link](#) to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum can provide an overview for teachers.

Finally, encourage students to reflect on what they have learnt about the town of Plauen and its population of Jewish and non-Jewish people. Remind students of the 1930 opening of the synagogue and community building and how it was built to show a commitment to Germany and that the Jewish community were loyal German citizens who played a role in the town (lesson 3), and ask them to review their timeline. To develop further complexity and discussion you may highlight to students that the [Nuremberg Race Laws](#) in 1935 took away Reich citizenship for German Jews.

Students should note how community relations changed over time and how a community building opened in 1930 could, in a few short years, be destroyed during the November Pogrom of 1938 (*Kristallnacht*). Having discussed the symbolism of community buildings (lesson 2), what might the destruction of the synagogue and communal building in 1938 say about the Jewish and non-Jewish community in Plauen?

The images of Plauen synagogue in the PowerPoint slideshow were recreated using computer-aided design software (CAD) in 1995 by students at Darmstadt University as part of a commemoration project to recreate synagogues destroyed during the November Pogrom of 1938 and 'as a tribute to the contribution of German Jews to the country's architecture' (New York Times: 1998).

Students need to ensure their timeline is completely finished before the next lesson, in preparation for their final piece of work.

Lesson 5: Re-telling what you have learnt about the city of Plauen

In this lesson, and possibly for further work, students will use their learning from previous lessons to create a presentation on Jewish life in Plauen before the war.

Ask students to complete Task Card 5: Re-telling what you have learnt about the city of Plauen.

Using their work from previous lessons, ask students to create a PowerPoint or presentation called 'Jewish life in Plauen before the War'. They should aim to include:

- The small number of Jewish people (less than 0.75%) in Germany before the Second World War.
- The geographical location of Plauen
- The development of Plauen as a lace city and the way it declined.
- How the city's growth and fall helped contribute to the antisemitic behaviour.
- The history of the city in the context of wider events.
- What they understand about the history of the Jewish and non-Jewish people who lived there.
- Information about individuals who lived in Plauen.
- Reflection on how Jewish and non-Jewish community relations changed over time.

Additional Information

Pedagogical guidance

The lessons' focus on one city allows students to more fully engage with a complex past. The city is not well known and was chosen for that very reason; for students to be able to reflect on the situation for small communities in large cities. But Plauen was also selected for the questions raised by the opening of its new community building and synagogue in 1930. If the economic conditions of the time mean some might consider such expenditure foolish, there is also the matter of growing support for the Nazi party in the area. The lesson aims to throw up some of the complexities of being an historian, that on the face of it things were going well for this community, but underneath, the synagogue was built in part to show a commitment to Germany by its citizens in the face of political change and during a period of uncertainty.

The lesson also looks at the stories of two families – the Klipsteins and the Dingfelders, both of whom lived in Plauen. Introducing these families to students offers the opportunity to develop research skills, using reliable websites, and find out what happened to them.

Additional information:

As indicated, further details on the Klipstein and Dingfelder families can be obtained by searching the USHMM website. For reference, here are some further details about the respective families from the USHMM website.

The Klipstein family managed to escape to Belgium, leaving behind Irma's parents. The family spent two and a half years working in the underground economy in Belgium before going into hiding in 1942. The family were denounced in 1943, but Ursula was not taken by the Gestapo as she was believed to be the child of a Dutch non-Jewish neighbour. Ursula spent the rest of the war in a convent, where half of the twenty five children were Jewish children in hiding. She was given the name Janine Hambenne. Her parents were taken to Malines Camp, but were not deported to a death camp as during a cultural evening at the camp Irma Klipstein read out a poem, her accent was recognised by the camp commandant as being from the same area of Germany he was from, and as a result did not deport Irma or her husband Leo.

The Dingfelder family also left Plauen. Martin the eldest son of Leopold immigrated to the USA in the 1930s. Leopold, wife Johanna and 15 year old Rudi boarded the ship the St Louis bound for Cuba. The ship was not allowed to dock and returned to Europe and ultimately the Dingfelders settled in Gouda, Netherlands. In 1942 Leopold and Johanna were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau where they were both murdered. Rudi was sent to various concentration camps, and was sent on a death march, where he and four others tried to escape. Of the five escapees three were shot, one died two days later and only Rudi survived. Rudi was found by Allied troops and returned to Gouda, he immigrated to the USA in 1946.

Acknowledgements, credits and sources of information

Original lesson plan and materials for 'Life in Plauen' created by Kay Andrews. © Kay Andrews, 2010, All Rights Reserved. Updated 2014. Additional editing of 'Life in Plauen' by Andy Pearce.

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The PowerPoint slide show images of Plauen synagogue are used with the kind permission of Technische Universität Darmstadt, Germany.

The animation for students 'Inside a synagogue' was created by John Wishart at Lagan College Belfast and is linked to with his kind permission

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ddPrQqgaz8>

Photograph of Dingfelder family butcher shop circa 1925 - USHMM collections #31765

www.ushmm.org

Photograph of Dingfelder family butcher shop circa 1925 - USHMM collections #46053

www.ushmm.org

Photograph of Ursula Klipstein 1937 - USHMM collections #99697 www.ushmm.org

Photograph of Isidore Goldberg - Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center: The Central Database of Shoah Victims' names <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/>

Page of testimony for Therese Wertheimer - Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center: The Central Database of Shoah Victims' names <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/>

Photograph of the destruction of Plauen synagogue. Permission from The Vogtland Publishing House pending.

Information about the November Pogrom (*Kristallnacht*) - USHMM:

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/kristallnacht>

Information about the Nuremberg Laws - USHMM:

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-nuremberg-race-laws>

Information about the history of Plauen - The Museum of the Jewish People:

<https://dbs.bh.org.il/place/plauen>

Information about the Technische Universität Darmstadt project - New York Times (1998)

<https://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/24/technology/destroyed-german-synagogues-return-to-life-on-a-web-page.html>

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