Holocaust Memorial Day 2027: A place to belong



KS3 Tutor Time Stimuli and Suggestions

January 2027

A place to belong



https://www.euroherz.de/ehemalige-synagoge-in-plauen-mauerreste-durch-statische-sicherung-gerettet-1729936/

Look carefully at this photograph. **What can you see?**

Write down:

- three things you notice
- one thing you think
- one thing you wonder

Look closely



https://www.euroherz.de/ehemalige-synagoge-in-plauen-mauerreste-durch-statische-sicherung-gerettet-1729936/

What might this place have been?
Use clues from the photograph to generate possible ideas.

What evidence supports your suggestion?

What can a wall tell us?

A wall can mark a boundary. A wall can also connect us to people who once used a place.
It can separate and divide. It can also be part of a home, a place of worship, or a place where people meet.

What can we know from this wall – and what can't we know yet?



https://www.euroherz.de/ehemalige-synagoge-in-plauen-mauerreste-durch-statische-sicherung-gerettet-1729936/

The image shows…	We still need evidence to know…

'I can see…'
'This might suggest…',
'I cannot tell whether…'

'An additional source (like….) would help us to…'

Holocaust Memorial Day 2027

• On 27th January, we mark the 82nd anniversary of the day in 1945, that Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration camp, in occupied Poland, was liberated.

• More than 1 million Jewish men, women and children were murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau, and more in other camps and locations, in a crime known as The Holocaust.

• 6 million Jewish people across Europe were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators, including 90% of all Europe's Jewish children (around 1.5 million).

• Millions of non-Jewish people were also targeted by the Nazis and their collaborators during this time.

A place in Plauen

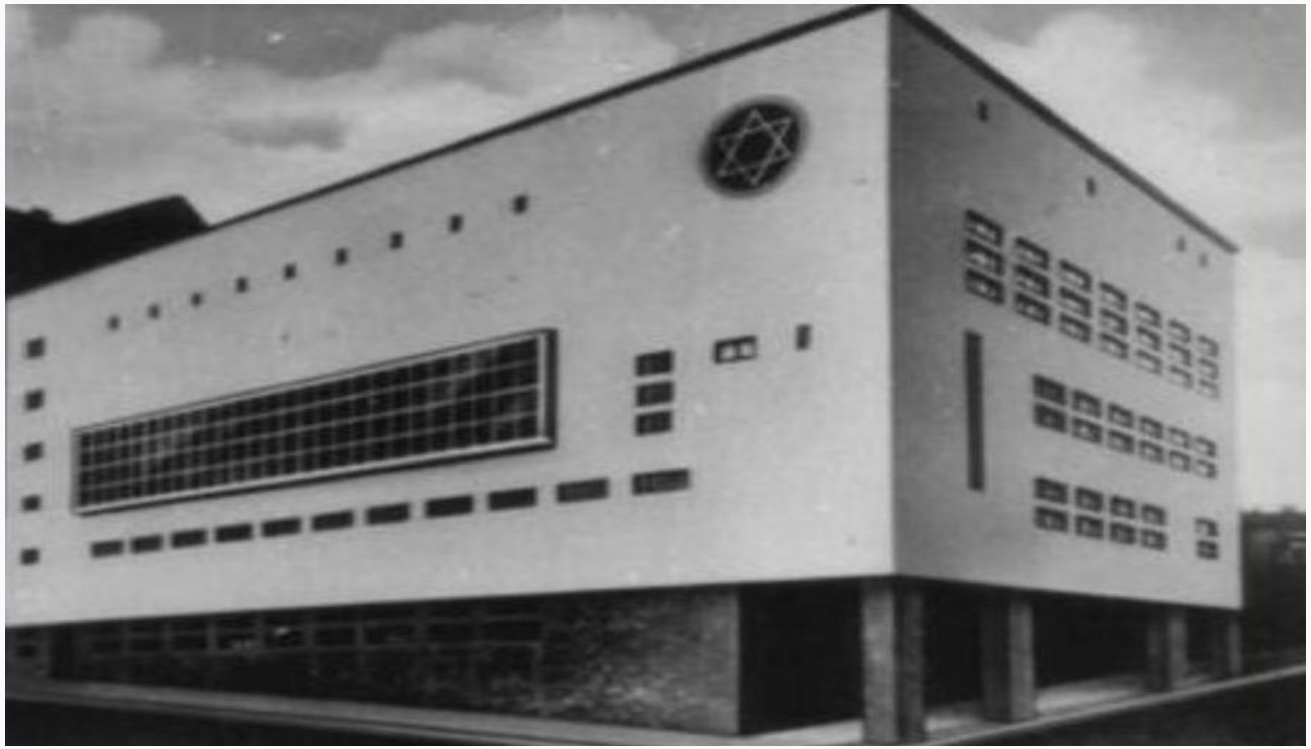
This site was once home to the Plauen Synagogue.

Opened in 1930, it served the local Jewish community. It was a Reform synagogue.

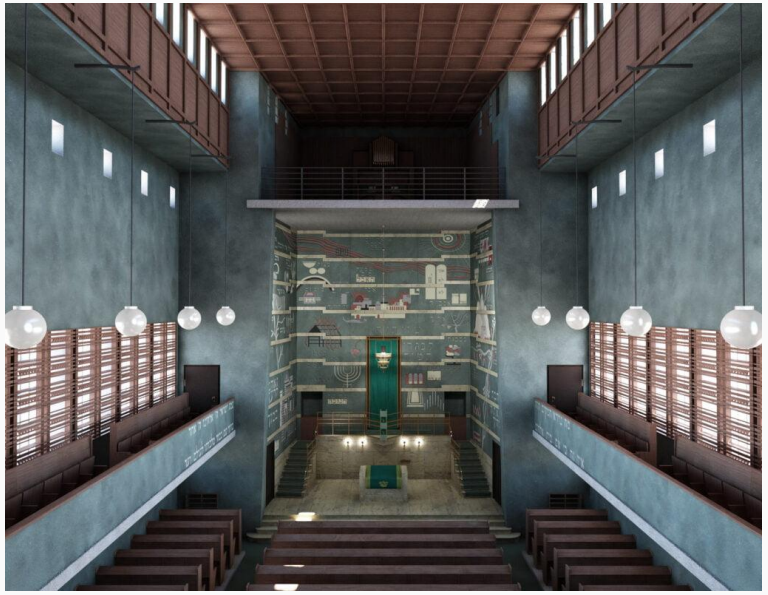
Jewish families gathered here for worship, celebrations, learning and community life.

Today, the remaining wall helps us remember both the building and the people connected to it.

- **What clues suggested this building was important to people?**
- **Why might communities choose to preserve part of a building after its destruction?**
- **What does this site tell us about remembering the past?**



Plauen synagogue images are used with the kind permission of Technische Universitat Darmstadt, Germany.



View of the Plauen synagogue, virtual reality application, 2020/ Berlin Jewish Museum © TU Darmstadt, Digital Design Unit, in cooperation with Architectura Virtualis

What makes a place important?

Think about a place that matters to you.

Perhaps it is: your home, a room, a school, a landscape, a sports club, a place of worship. somewhere you meet friends

Places become important because of the people, memories and experiences connected to them.

- **What makes somewhere feel familiar?**
- **What creates a sense of belonging?**
- **Can a place be important even if it is not your home?**

A town where people lived

Plauen is a town in Saxony, Germany. Jewish families had lived in Plauen for many years and were one part of this wider community.

There had been Jewish people living in Plauen since 1308. The Jewish community began to grow again in the 1870s. People began to move from other areas to live there. Many Jews were proud of their German heritage. Rudi Leavor, a Jewish refugee from Germany, recalled, for example: *'We considered ourselves to be Germans and we happened to be Jewish as well.'*

Before the First World War in 1914 Plauen's Jewish population was about 800. Some Jewish people had moved to Plauen from Poland and the surrounding towns because of the success of the lace industry. Plauen's lace industry dated back to the 15th Century. With new machinery and lace factories it began to develop further in the 1800s. In 1900 the Plauen lace industry won a gold medal at the Paris Exhibition. Making and selling lace trade began to decline after the First World War.

In 1925 there were 623 Jewish people living in Plauen. In 1930, Plauen had a total population of roughly 120,000 to 125,000 residents, while its Jewish community numbered around 800 people, accounting for approximately 0.65% of the city's total population. But by 1933 the Jewish population had fallen to 519.

There were shops, factories, schools, cafés, homes and places of worship that formed the town.



Photograph of Dingfelder family butcher shop circa 1925 – USHMM collections #31765 www.ushmm.org



What does this tell us about Plauen?



Photograph of Ursula Klipstein 1937 – USHMM collections #99697 www.ushmm.org (and classroom group)

A family and a shop

- **What do you notice first?**
- **What might this photograph tell us?**
- **What might somebody looking at this photograph in 1925 have expected the future to hold?**
- **What questions does it leave unanswered?**
- **What other evidence might historians need?**

This photograph shows the kosher butcher's shop owned by Leopold Dingfelder. Customers visited the shop to buy food and meet members of the local community. Photographs like this can help historians learn about everyday life.



Photograph of Dingfelder family butcher shop circa 1925 – USHMM collections #31765 www.ushmm.org

What made this place home?

People often develop strong connections to places through: family, friendships, work, school, community activities and traditions

Belonging is usually built gradually through everyday experiences.

- Which of these factors might have mattered most to the Dingfelder family?
- Why can belonging be difficult to measure?
- How can historians investigate people's connections to place?



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

More than one family



Photograph of Dingfelder family butcher shop circa 1925 – USHMM collections #31765 www.ushmm.org



We know there had been Jewish people living in Plauen since 1308 and that by 1928–30, with the building of the synagogue on Engelstraße 15, its Jewish community numbered around 800 people, accounting for approximately 0.65% of the city's total population.

So a Jewish community had lived in Plauen long before the Nazi era. Its members had different lives, jobs, religious and political beliefs, families, hobbies and experiences. The synagogue, businesses and community organisations show that Jewish life in Plauen involved many different people.

The Jewish community included:

children

parents

business owners

workers

students

older people

Like any community, experiences varied.



Plauen synagogue images are used with the kind permission of Technische Universitat Darmstadt, Germany.



Photograph of Ursula Klipstein 1937 – USHMM collections #99697 www.ushmm.org (and classroom group)

Looking again



Photograph of Dingfelder family butcher shop circa 1925 – USHMM collections #31765 www.ushmm.org



What have we learned about Jewish life in Plauen before Nazi rule in 1933?

Use the evidence we have explored so far – you might want to think about:

- **What evidence suggests Jewish residents belonged in Plauen?**
- **Which sources have helped us reach that conclusion?**
- **What questions still remain?**

A space becomes a place when people invest it with meaning.

What gave meaning to the Dingfelders' shop, their home, and the synagogue?



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Photograph of Ursula Klipstein 1937 – USHMM collections #99697 www.ushmm.org (and classroom group)

What began to change?

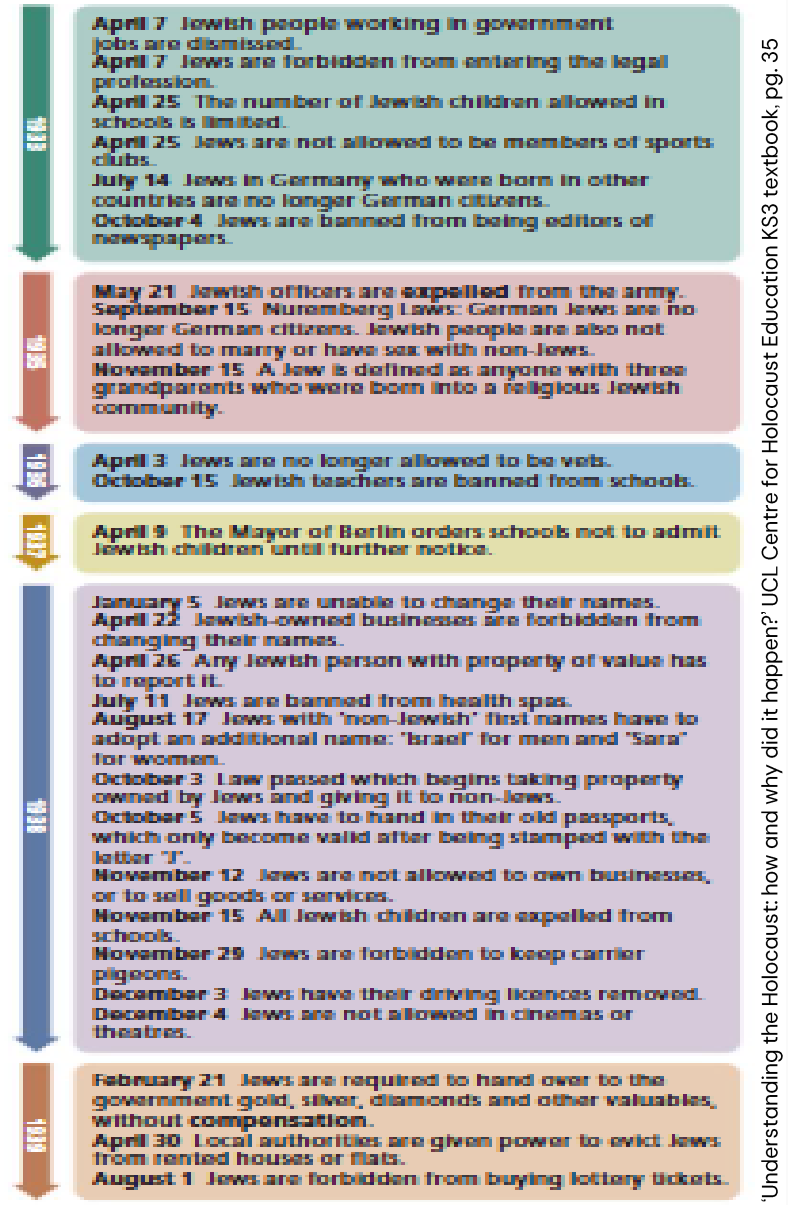
In January 1933, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany.

The Nazi government introduced laws, policies and propaganda that increasingly targeted Jewish people.

Changes happened over time.

The experiences of Jewish people in towns such as Plauen were gradually transformed.

- **Why might gradual changes sometimes be difficult to notice?**
- **How can governments influence who belongs within a society?**
- **What evidence can historians use to investigate change?**
- **What might change when a government begins to decide who belongs, who can participate, and who is treated as an outsider?**



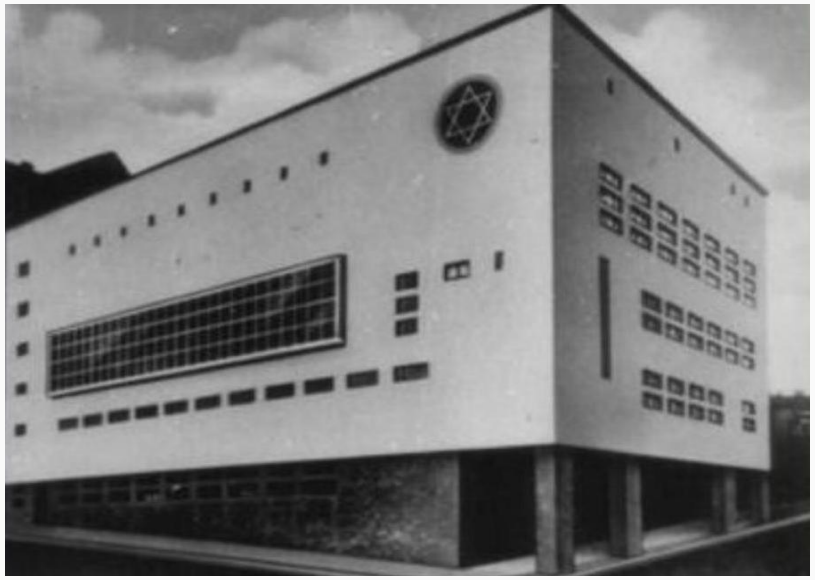
'Understanding the Holocaust: how and why did it happen?' UCL Centre for Holocaust Education KS3 textbook, pg. 35

The synagogue before and after

Look carefully at these three images.

When the synagogue opened in 1930 it symbolised community life and belonging. Only eight years later it would become a target of anti-Jewish violence.

What might this change suggest about developments in Germany during the 1930s?



Plauen synagogue images are used with the kind permission of Technische Universitat Darmstadt, Germany.



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



The Plauen memorial plaque at Engelstrasse/Senefelder Strasse. © Ellen Liebner, https://www.tag24.de/sachsen/vogtland/84-jahre-nach-der-zerstoerung-plauen-erinnert-an-vernichtete-synagoge-2657713

November 1938: a turning point

Across Germany and Austria, synagogues, businesses and homes were attacked during the November Pogrom. On 9–10 November 1938, Nazi-organised violence saw over 1,400 synagogues were burned, vandalised, or destroyed, approximately 26,000 to 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and imprisoned without trial in concentration camps (such as Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen) and more than 90 people were murdered during the immediate violence.

The Plauen synagogue was among those destroyed.

For many Jewish communities, these attacks demonstrated that persecution had entered a new and more violent phase.



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

- **What does this tell us about who had power?**
- **Why might places of worship be targeted?**
- **What messages are conveyed when communal buildings are attacked?**

A misconception to investigate

We know that in 1928–1930 Plauen's Jewish community numbered around 800 people, accounting for approximately 0.65% of the city's total population.

In 2025 a research survey by the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education, found that only 10.0% of students could correctly identify that less than 1% of Germany's population was Jewish in 1933.

In 2016, 6.3% answered correctly.

What might this misconception change about how we understand Jewish life in Germany?



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

A small community, a town transformed

In 1928–30 Plauen had around 110,000 residents, among them around 800 Jewish people. Yet Jewish life was transformed once the Nazis came to power, their rules consolidated, from 1933.

How could a minority community become increasingly excluded from a town in which its members had long lived and worked?



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

Could the Dingfelders leave?

Many Jewish families wanted to leave Germany, but leaving was often difficult.

People needed:

- passports
- visas
- money
- transport
- another country willing to accept them

Finding safety was far more complicated than simply deciding to leave. The Dingfelder family's story did not end when life in Plauen became increasingly difficult.

- **What might a family need in order to leave a country?**

- **What might prevent them?**



Photograph of Dingfelder family butcher shop circa 1925 – USHMM collections #31765
www.ushmm.org

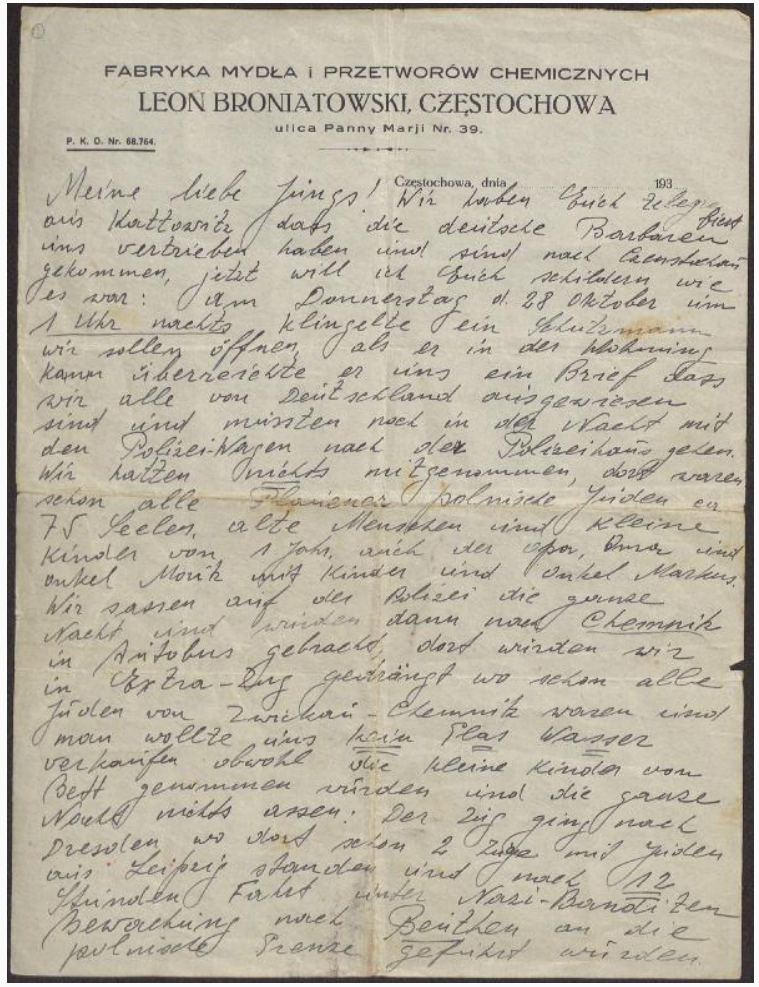
Josef Broniatowski: A Voice from Plauen

Josef Broniatowski was a Jewish resident of Plauen.
In letters written during 1938, he described trying to obtain visas so that his family could leave Germany and find safety.

He explained how opportunities were becoming increasingly limited and how many Jewish families feared what might happen next.
'Fear and confusion gripped Jewish families in Plauen, Leipzig and other German cities...'

A few months later, Josef and his family were caught up in the Polenaktion.
The Polenaktion was the forced expulsion of thousands of Polish Jews living in Germany in October 1938.

- **What does Josef's experience suggest about life for Jewish families in Germany by 1938?**
- **Why might obtaining a visa have been so important?**
- **What emotions and uncertainties might families have faced at this time?**


FABRYKA MYDŁA i PRZETWORÓW CHEMICZNYCH
LEON BRONIATOWSKI, CZĘSTOCHOWA
ulica Panny Marji Nr. 39.
P. K. O. Nr. 68.764.

https://perspectives.ushmm.org/item/letter-by-josef-broniatowski

Polenaktion and the November Pogrom?

Connected events? October and November 1938

October 1938: Thousands of Polish Jews were expelled from Germany during the Polenaktion.

7 November 1938: Herschel Grynszpan learned that his family had been expelled and stranded at the Polish border.

9 November 1938: Grynszpan shot a German diplomat Ernst vom Rath in Paris in protest/reprisal.

9–10 November 1938: The Nazi regime used the shooting as a pretext for violent attacks against Jewish communities across Germany and Austria, known as *Kristallnacht* (the November Pogrom).

- **Why is it important to understand events that happened before Kristallnacht?**
- **How does this timeline help us understand escalation?**



https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/life-in-nazi-occupied-europe/oppression/the-polenaktion/

Leaving Plauen

Many Jewish refugees looked for countries where they could rebuild their lives.
From the archival documents we know that the Dingfelder family did leave Plauen. Martin the eldest son of Leopold emigrated 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 refused permission to land in Cuba and returned to Europe. Although they had escaped Germany, uncertainty about where they would be accepted remained a major challenge.

What does this add to our understanding of escape and safety?



Photograph of Dingfelder family butcher shop circa 1925 – USHMM collections #31765
www.ushmm.org

A new place does not always mean safety

Some refugees settled temporarily in places they hoped would be safer.

The Dingfelder family's story later connects with the Netherlands. We know from historical documents that when their ship, the St Louis bound for Cuba, was not allowed to dock and returned to Europe, ultimately the Dingfelders settled in Gouda, Netherlands, believing they would be safe.
In May 1940 Germany invaded and occupied the Netherlands and Nazi anti-Jewish laws were put in place. Life progressively got harder. 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 emigrated to the USA in 1946.

What happens when persecution follows people beyond the place they tried to leave?

Places which once appeared safe could quickly become dangerous.



Photograph of Dingfelder family butcher shop circa 1925 – USHMM collections #31765
www.ushmm.org

What choices were possible?

People made decisions throughout this period.
However, those decisions were shaped by circumstances beyond their control.
Historians often think about both agency and constraint.

Think, pair, share:

- **What could the family control?**
- **What was outside their control?**
- **What do we need to know before judging a decision made under persecution?**



Photograph of Dingfelder family butcher shop circa 1925 – USHMM collections #31765
www.ushmm.org

Persecution is a process

The Holocaust did not happen all at once.
It developed through a series of decisions, policies, laws, restrictions and escalating persecution.
Individual lives were affected in different ways.



Photograph of Dingfelder family butcher shop circa 1925 – USHMM collections #31765
www.ushmm.org

Another person in Plauen

So far, we have explored the experiences of Jewish residents in Plauen.
The Nazi regime also persecuted other people and groups for different reasons. One of these individuals was Eugen Fritsch.
Fritsch came to live in Plauen and became known for speaking out against the Nazi regime.
His story helps us think about different experiences of persecution and opposition in Nazi Germany

- **What do we already know about life in Plauen during the 1930s?**
- **Why might some people disagree with the ideas and actions of a government?**
- **What risks might someone face if they openly criticised a dictatorship?**
- **What evidence would help us understand why he was targeted?**



https://www.reichsbanner-geschichte.de/personen/person/default-06d206564c

Another person in Plauen

This is a Stolperstein, a small memorial stone placed outside a person's last known address, used to remember individuals (mostly, but not exclusively Jews) who were persecuted or murdered by the Nazi regime between 1933 and 1945. The word is German for ‘stumbling stone’. This one is for Eugen Fritsch – and can be found outside his last known address.

- The Stolperstein records for Plauen reveal that Fritsch was a prominent local member of the workers' movement (supporting workers' rights).
- He was chairman of the SPD in Plauen (a political party that opposed the Nazis).
- He was a city councillor and newspaper editor (an elected local representative and journalist).
- He was arrested in April 1933 after warning about the Nazi threat (speaking out against Nazi ideas).
- He was later transferred to KZ Hohnstein (an early concentration camp for Nazi opponents).
- He was beaten to death there on 8 September 1933 (after months of imprisonment and abuse).



https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_der_Stolpersteine_in_Plauen

What evidence suggests Fritsch was considered a threat by the Nazis?

Two people, one town

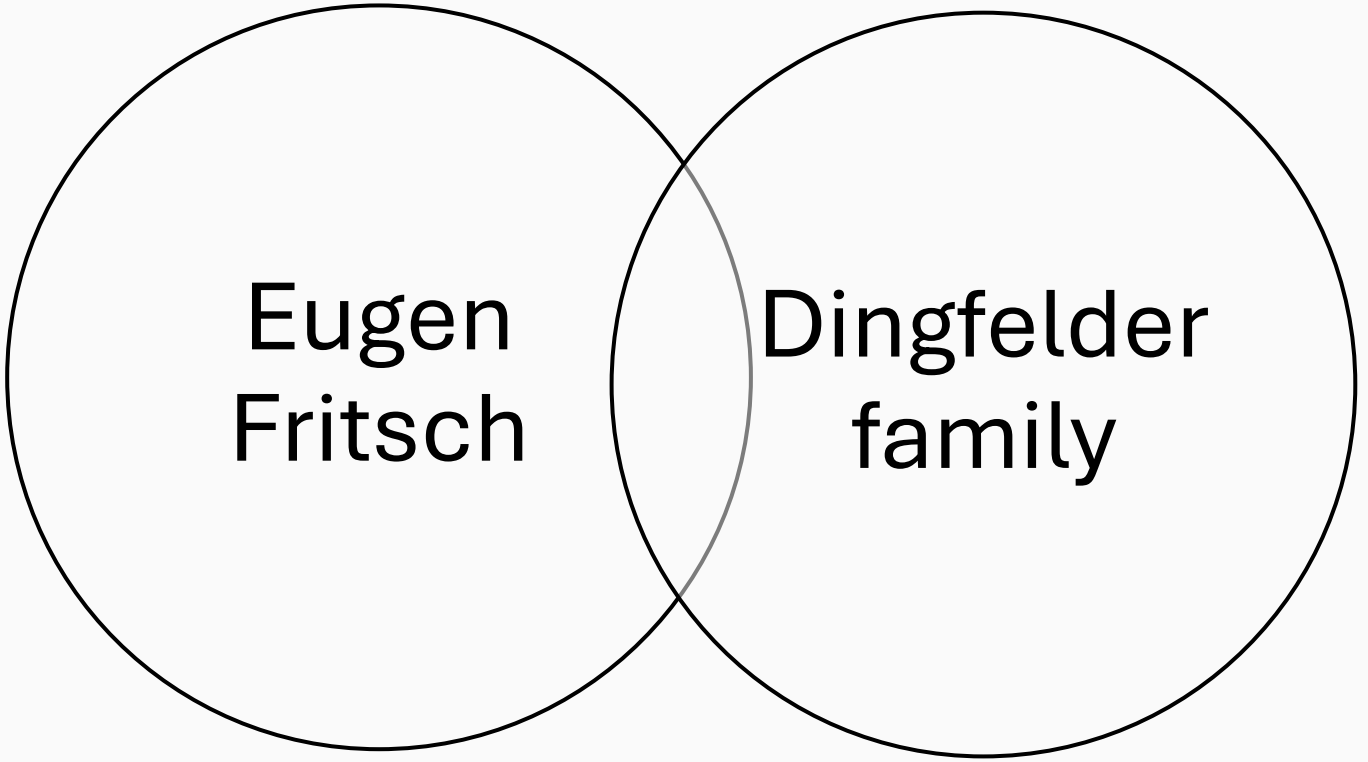
Both Fritsch and the Dingfelder family experienced persecution under Nazi rule. However, they were targeted for different reasons. The Dingfelder family: targeted as Jews. Eugen Fritsch: targeted as a political opponent of the Nazi regime.

What is different about these experiences? What might they help us understand about Nazi rule?

Complete the Venn diagram to consider similarities and differences in the experiences of these Plauen residents in the 1930-40s.

Think about:

- Why were they targeted?
- What happened to them?
- What evidence do we have?
- What can these stories teach us about Nazi Germany?



Not one single experience

People in the same town could experience Nazi rule differently.

The evidence from Plauen shows:

- Jewish people were part of local life before Nazi rule.
- Change happened over time.
- Different groups experienced persecution differently.
- Individual experiences varied.

Complete:
'It would be misleading to say
_____
because the evidence shows
_____.'

Why does it matter that we understand who was targeted, why, and how?

Challenge: **What is the strongest piece of evidence we have encountered today? Why?**



Photograph of Dingfelder family butcher shop circa 1925 – USHMM collections #31765
www.ushmm.org

Return to the wall

At the start of this session, the wall was simply a photograph.
Now we know it is part of the site of the Plauen synagogue.

The wall tells us:

- a Jewish community lived here
- people invested this place with meaning
- the synagogue was destroyed in 1938
- people today continue to remember

Questions to consider

- **What can the wall tell us?**
- **What can the wall not tell us?**
- **Why do historians need other sources too?**
- **What does the wall mean to us now?**
- **Has your understanding of the photograph changed?**

The story of Plauen shows how belonging can be built over many years and how exclusion can develop over time.
Exploring evidence from one place helps us better understand the experiences of people who lived through this history.



https://www.euroherz.de/ehemalige-synagoge-in-plauen-mauerreste-durch-statische-sicherung-gerettet-1729936/



The Plauen memorial plaque at Engelstrasse/Senefelder Strasse. © Ellen Liebner, https://www.tag24.de/sachsen/vogtland/84-jahre-nach-der-zerstoerung-plauen-erinnert-an-vernichtete-synagoge-2657713

What should a place remember?

Following the theft of a previous version, a replacement bronze plaque made by artist Peter Luban was officially dedicated at the site of the former Plauen synagogue on January 23, 2026. The bronze plaque features an image of a menorah depicted above text that translates as ***'Here stood the synagogue of the Jewish religious community of Plauen, which was destroyed by the fascists from the 9th to the 10th of November, 1938.'*** An event is commemorated, a building is being remembered, but what about the people?

Imagine you are creating a museum label for visitors, about the synagogue at Plauen.

Your label must help people understand:
- ✓ who lived here
- ✓ why this place mattered
- ✓ what changed
- ✓ why the site is remembered today

Think about:
What is the most important message visitors should leave with?

What must visitors understand about the people who belonged here and what changed?



The Plauen memorial plaque at Engelstrasse/Senefelder Strasse.
© Ellen Liebner, https://www.tag24.de/sachsen/vogtland/84-jahre-nach-der-zerstoerung-plauen-erinnert-an-vernichtete-synagoge-2657713

Make a memory card

Include:

Who? A person, family or community.
Evidence One specific source or piece of evidence.
What changed? Explain briefly.
Remember What should future visitors understand?

Sentence Starter
'This place matters because…'



https://www.euroherz.de/ehemalige-synagoge-in-plauen-mauerreste-durch-statische-sicherung-gerettet-1729936/

What do we carry forward?

Today we explored one place: Plauen. Through evidence from that place, we learned about belonging, exclusion, persecution and Remembrance.

We know that the synagogue no longer stands, but part of one wall remains.
Today, the Bruchstelle 1938 (Break point 1938) project invites people to visit this place, learn about the community that once gathered there, and reflect on what was lost when the synagogue was destroyed.

The surviving wall is both a reminder and a question:

- Who worshipped here?
- What did this place mean to them?
- What happened to the people connected to it?
- How should we remember them today?

By preserving this site, and acknowledging what was lost, people in Plauen are carrying memory forward into the present.

Finally, complete one sentence:
‘Before this lesson I thought…
Now I understand…’



Acknowledgements

These stimuli draw upon extracts from the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education's materials/resources, 'Life in Plauen'.

https://holocausteducation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Research-Digest-2.pdf

'Understanding the Holocaust: how and why did it happen?', KS3 textbook, by Centre's Stuart Foster, Andy Pearce, Eleni Karayianni and Helen McCord.

Images, as credited within the slides.

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