

## Engaging with Students' Starting Points

Note that the lesson sketch below is intended as a way of uncovering students' starting points; that is, unpicking what they already know or think they know about the historical events and where they might have acquired those impressions (it may of course be that they know very little). The aim is to bring to the surface potential misconceptions before new learning is attached to these. We would *not* recommend this approach as an introduction to formal learning about the Holocaust. Following the guidelines laid out by HET, we would suggest this instead begins with a discussion of the lives of Jewish people before World War II, which may emerge from the discussions in this 'starting points' lesson. We suggest using an image without people in it which nonetheless represents the persecution of Jewish people under National Socialism. Images of the camps can be dehumanising for victims and survivors and in many cases are taken from the perspective of perpetrators. They should therefore be used with caution in the classroom and – as with all media – with careful consideration of what is age appropriate.



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burning\\_Synagoge\\_Kristallnacht\\_1938.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burning_Synagoge_Kristallnacht_1938.jpg).

Students are presented with an image of the synagogue in the German town of Siegen, set on fire during the November Pogrom ('Night of Broken Glass') in 1938. Give students the basic information to allow them to locate the image in their prior knowledge: e.g., that it is a synagogue (a Jewish place of worship) in Germany in 1938. What do they think is going on in the image? Why was the synagogue set on fire? Who set it on fire? What happened next? This opening section

of the lesson might involve whole class discussion and the unpicking of the image on the white board. The aim is to establish prior understandings of the persecution of Jewish people under National Socialism, the context of World War II and the events of the Holocaust.

What questions do students have about the image and the events represented in it? If we want to answer these questions, what are some of the challenges of doing so?

What types of sources do we have and what can they tell us?

Who/what might tell us something about this period?	What form might the evidence about what happened take?	Where might we find this evidence today?	What could this source tell us?	What can we not find out from this source?

Table 1