

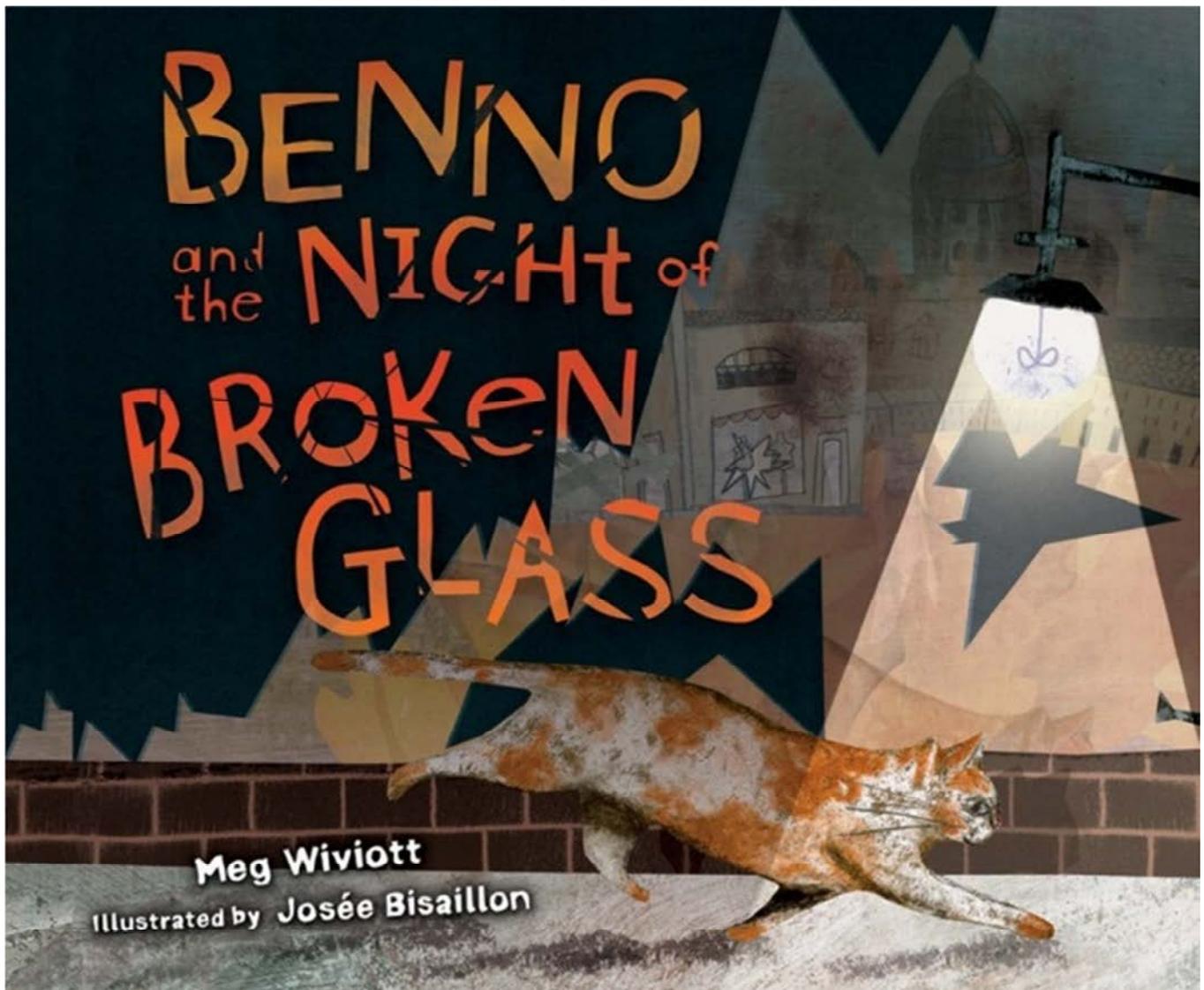
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Resources for Teachers and Students



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Why Teach About the Holocaust?

The Holocaust was the systematic and deliberate murder of groups, primarily Jews, disliked by the Nazis in Europe between the years 1933-1945. Hitler and his followers convinced Germany and its allies that the murder of innocent people was necessary to create a New World Order.

The study of the Holocaust provides one of the most effective tools to discuss prejudice and cultivate appreciation of diversity. A structured study of the Holocaust provides lessons for an investigation of basic morals and human behavior. Within classroom investigation of the Holocaust, students can realize that the Holocaust was personal, not just an historical event, and they can recognize the importance of democratic values and personal freedoms, as well as the responsibilities of citizenship in the world.

How to Use This Guide

As younger students learn about the Holocaust, it can be difficult for them to understand how this level of human tragedy occurred. Using the perspective of a cat, this book is a useful tool for helping children see the gradual shifts in daily life in Nazi Europe. This book shows how the Holocaust's long shadows began gradually and how politics and Nazi rule affected personal relationships and increasingly endangered Jews and others whom the Nazis disliked.

Additionally, the book can be used with upper grades as supplemental material when teaching a unit about the Holocaust. Older students can benefit from thinking critically about the way a historically inspired story is presented. Students can read actively and deeply, making inferences and interpretations based on the text and visuals (and their interplay) in a picture book.

About the Book

About the Author



Meg Wiviott grew up in New Jersey. She attended the University of Wisconsin where she majored in History, and earned a Master's Degree in Education from Northwestern University. Meg and her husband have two grown children and live in New Jersey. Meg has enjoyed writing since she was five years old and has often found solace in the pages of a good book. This is her first picture book.

About the Illustrator

Josée Bisailon grew up in St. Hyacinthe, Canada. Rather than following in her father's footsteps as a veterinary surgeon, she elected to make cut-paper animals: they were colorful, low maintenance, and always in fine health. Her illustrations, focused on animals, are a mixture of collage, drawings, and digital montage, taking us into a richly detailed and multidimensional world.

Context

The book's title refers to *Kristallnacht*, two days of government supported, anti-Jewish violence in Germany and Austria. These attacks, also called *pogroms*, included the destruction of synagogues, Jewish-owned stores and homes, as well as Jewish cemeteries, hospitals, and schools. Rioters included soldiers and police as well as regular citizens. Many people were injured and nearly one hundred people were killed during the riots. In German, *Kristallnacht* means broken glass, a reference to the shattered synagogue and store windows. Many scholars consider *Kristallnacht* as an important turning point in Germany's treatment of the Jewish people toward greater violence and ultimately the Nazi final solution of total genocide.

Vocabulary and Allusions

Rosenstrasse: literally, street of roses

Neue Synagoge: in German, this means “the New Synagogue,” and it was the largest synagogue in Berlin in November 1938. It still exists today as a museum, and visitors can see the synagogue’s dome.

Hausmeister: German for janitor or property caretaker

Sabbath: a day of rest or worship observed in religions. In Judaism, the Sabbath is from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday.

Schnitzel: a traditional German and Austrian dish of meat coated in breadcrumbs and fried

Herr: German for Mr.

Guten Morgen: German for Good Morning

Frau: German for Mrs.

Brown-shirted men: a reference to Nazi *Sturmabteilung* (in German meaning, Storm Troopers), soldiers who wore brown shirts as part of their uniforms. These soldiers participated in violence against Jews on *Kristallnacht*.

Torah scroll: Jewish religious scriptures written on parchment wrapped around a scroll. These are often valuable and are always treated with great care and respect. Many were destroyed during *Kristallnacht*.

Questions:

For before reading:

1. Imagine what the life of a cat without an owner might be like. Who and what would the cat see?
2. Does the title sound positive and good or not? Why?
3. Is it ever okay to treat people differently, like to take away something from one group and allow another to have it? When? Why or Why not?

For reading together:

1. What is Benno’s life like?
2. What are some similarities between Sophie and Inge? What are their differences?
3. How does Benno spend his day? Where does he go?
4. What changes did Benno notice in the neighborhood?
5. Why did Sophie walk with her head low?
6. What does Benno see the mob doing?

For post-reading discussion:

1. How do the illustrations help tell the story? Do they change at all during the story?
2. What happens to Sophie and Inge's friendship? How do they feel about it?
3. When the scary night happens, who is affected? Who isn't? Why?
4. What happens to Benno's Jewish friends?
5. How does Benno feel at the end of the story?
6. Why do you think the story is told from the perspective of a cat rather than a person?

Suggested activities:

Who Am I:

Select a human character from the book. Write an autobiography (1-2 paragraphs). Answer the question *Who am I?* Make sure you write about what ideas, such as religion or politics, in which the character believes.

Anthropomorphism Exercise:

Giving a non-human animal or object qualities of a human being is called anthropomorphism. A common example is cartoons of animals that do activities like talk or drive cars. Animals cannot actually do either of those activities. For this exercise, you will be anthropomorphizing Benno by giving him the ability to think and express himself. Select one image of Benno from the book and write out what he is thinking about in that scene. Use your creativity to explain Benno's thoughts, feelings, emotions, and opinions.

Letter to My Friend:

Practice writing a letter using the proper formatting. In *Benno and the Night of Broken Glass*, we see the friendship between Sophie and Inge come to an end. Write a letter from Sophie to Inge or from Inge to Sophie explaining how you feel about your friendship since the changes that have occurred on Rosenstrasse.

Standing Up Against Injustice:

In *Benno and the Night of Broken Glass*, we see examples of different people being treated in different ways. Get into small groups and make a list of ways that people were treated unfairly in the story. After you make your list, talk about standing up to injustice. When should people stand up against injustice? Why should they?

Photo Inspiration Poem:

Go online and look at appropriate photographs of the property damage done on *Kristallnacht*. Select one object and write a poem from the perspective of that object. In your poem, tell the story of what happened to the object during the night of violence.