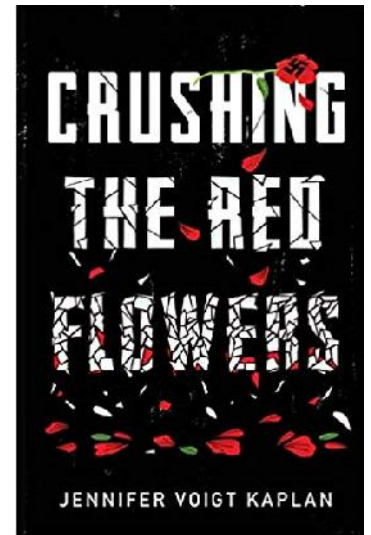


# A Curriculum Guide for Educators & Readers

Aligned to the Common Core Grades 5–8

Discussion points, activities, and writing prompts to help educators use *Crushing the Red Flowers* as a classroom read aloud or as a selection for independent reading.

Great for book clubs, too!



## About the Author



**Jennifer Voigt Kaplan** is an award-winning author of children’s fiction. Her debut middle-grade novel, *Crushing the Red Flowers*, was recognized in six literary contests before its publication, including earning a Letter of Merit for the SCBWI Work-in-Progress Grant and winning the middle-grade category of the *Publishers Weekly* Booklife Prize for Fiction. Jennifer was born in Germany, raised in Philadelphia, and now resides in the New York City area. To learn more about Jennifer, visit [www.JenniferVK.com](http://www.JenniferVK.com)



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# About the Book

*Crushing the Red Flowers* is the story of how two ordinary boys cope under the extraordinary circumstances of Kristallnacht.

Emil Rosen and Friedrich Weber couldn't have less in common, but in the summer of 1938 they must both deal with the changes steamrolling through pre-WWII Germany. Friedrich struggles with an uncle in jail and a cruel Hitler Youth leader, while Emil does his best to avoid the blistering anti-Semitism that's threatening his family life. As the rules of yesterday no longer make sense, both boys find comfort at a private spot along the Leine River.

Then in the late hours of November 9, 1938, their world explodes, and the two boys are forced together in a race against time as Friedrich risks his life to save Emil and his family.

## Common Core Aligned for Grades 5-8

5<sup>th</sup> grade: ELA. RL.5.1,2,3,4,6, 7, 8, 9; W.5.3a-e,4; SL.5.4,5; L.5.1,2,3,4

6<sup>th</sup> grade: ELA. RL.6.1,2,3,4,5,6,9; W.6.3a-e,4; SL.6.1a,3,4,5; L.6.1,2,3,4a,c,d

7<sup>th</sup> grade: ELA. RL.7.1,2,3,4,5,6,9; W.7.3a-e,4; SL.7.4,5; L.7.1,2,3

8<sup>th</sup> grade: ELA. RL.8.1,2,3,4,6,9; W.8.3a-e,4; SL.8.1a,3,5; L.8.1,2,3,4a,c,d; RH.6- 8.1,2,4,6; WSH.6-8.7,8,9

## Before You Read

1. Take a close look at the cover illustration of *Crushing the Red Flowers*. Describe all the elements you see.
  - a. Can you make any predictions about the time period or setting of the novel?
  - b. Can you predict what this book may be about?

- c. What from the illustration and title of the book supports your prediction?
2. Read the back cover of the book. What words or phrases stand out to you?
3. List three questions that you have about this novel after looking at the cover and the back of the book.
4. Look closely at the design of the book: the colors, text, cover illustration, and word choice. How would you describe the mood of the design?
5. Who do you think is the intended audience of this book? If you saw this book on a shelf, would you want to read it? Why or why not?

Write a paragraph describing your thoughts about the book and include one question you have that you hope to learn the answer to when you read. Share your paragraph with the class.

## Part One

1. Why do you think chapter one is titled "Pawns"?
2. Friedrich "would say any words, just to escape a beating afterwards." What does this tell you about Friedrich's character and his involvement with the Jungvolk? Use Friedrich's Jungvolk Good-Bad Criteria List as textual evidence to support your answer.
3. In chapter one, Friedrich felt "like a shell. Hollow inside, jagged outside." What does this mean? Have you ever felt like this?
4. Emil's uncle suggested taking down the mezuzah that hung outside their apartment door so that the family would be more inconspicuous. What do you think he meant by this? What does this say about how Jews were viewed in Hannover in 1938?

### Who is Friedrich?

Draw an outline of a human figure, which will represent Friedrich, on a large piece of paper.

Using Part One as evidence, write any known details about Friedrich inside the outline.

Outside the outline, write any questions about Friedrich that you might have.

5. Otto's beating was the first time Friedrich had seen violence within the Jungvolk. Discuss Friedrich's reaction to the incident. How did it make him feel?
6. Why does Emil's mama believe the family should leave Germany? Vati, Emil's father, disagrees with her. Why?
7. In chapter four, Emil feels like he can't change anything in the world. Have you ever felt that way? Discuss.
8. In the late 1930s, the United States did not significantly loosen policies to accept increased immigration requests from Jewish people, although the government was informed of violence against them. Does the United States share in the accountability?

#### **Who is Emil?**

Draw an outline of a human figure, which will represent Emil, on a large piece of paper.

Using Part One as evidence, write any known details about Emil inside the outline.

Outside the outline, write any questions about Emil that you might have.

9. Research the visa and affidavit process to leave Germany in 1938.
10. What is the new Jungvolk competition for the summer? Why is Friedrich optimistic about it?
11. Why is the spot by the river so important to Emil? How does he feel and/or react when he sees Friedrich there?
12. Why is the spot by the river so important to Friedrich? How does he feel and/or react when he sees Emil there?
13. Emil hears a commotion coming from the Klein Stationary Shop. What does he witness? Why does this incident remind Emil of his marble game with "the boys"?
14. In chapter seven, why was Friedrich not permitted to shop in a Jewish Store?

15. There were others standing around watching the two Brownshirts accost Mr. Klein. Emil wonders why no one did anything. What could have been the reason?
16. After witnessing the incident outside the Klein Stationary Shop, Emil feels the world was "different, twisted." Explain the reason for these feelings in your own words.
17. Explain Uncle Hilmar's "Would-Could-Should" technique.
18. Why does Mama give Mrs. Schmidt her favorite piano brooch?
19. When Emil asks his sister, Sarah, what is happening in Germany, she says: "This has been with us for a long time. It's been like a fog all around us, but you couldn't see it. Think about your old school friends. The ones you used to play with. They started ignoring you years ago, right? Then they gossiped about you. Now who knows what they'll do. The fog has clumped into clouds. Now you can see it." What do you think she means? What do the fog and the clouds symbolize?
20. Discuss how life for German Jews changed in 1938 (*refer to the historical timeline on the educational resources page on [www.JenniferVK.com](http://www.JenniferVK.com)*).
21. What does being Jewish mean to Emil?
22. Why didn't the Rosens leave Germany earlier?
23. Friedrich and Albert used to be best friends. In your own words, describe their friendship. How do you think both boys feel about not being able to be best friends anymore?

24. How does Friedrich's mother's belief that "Impressions are important" affect Friedrich? List two examples from chapters 1-9, as evidence to support your answer.

25. The last sentence of chapter 14 reads: "Instead, his eyebrow flapped as if it was starting a fire." Broadly, the fire symbolizes the fabric of society unraveling, but on a smaller scale, it symbolizes Friedrich contributing to the unraveling situation. He doesn't agree with Günter's actions, but by going along with him, he makes things worse. This is a common criticism of German citizens of the time. Did you ever go along with something you didn't think was right?

### Making Connections

Like Emil's family in *Crushing the Red Flowers*, hundreds of thousands of Jews living in Germany attempted to immigrate to other nations, including the United States, in the late 1930s due to the intensification of the Nazi regime's attacks.

To enter another country, each person needed a visa with their passport. Obtaining the necessary papers to leave Germany proved difficult. The process sometimes took years.

Conduct research regarding what refugees needed to obtain a United States visa in the 1930s. What is necessary to acquire refugee status in America today?

What about the processes is similar? What is different?

Why do you think refugee regulations are in place? Would you make any suggestions to change the process? Why do you think immigration is such an important topic today?

### In Your Own Words

In your own words, explain the meaning of one of the following quotes from Part One of *Crushing the Red Flowers*.

“You can turn from the wind, Emil, but it’s still going to blow.” –Sarah, page 37

“Cooperation is a requirement, not an option.” –Fredrich’s mother, page 74

Explain the quote’s meaning in regard to the events in *Crushing the Red Flowers*, but also in regard to your own life. How does it relate to events in your own life?

## Part Two

1. While in the graveyard, Emil sets out to replace the stones that had fallen off the tombstones. They felt like “lost connections between people who loved each other.” Emil says, “The stones had a specific place in the world and it didn’t seem right they were pushed out.” How are these stones similar to the experiences of Jewish people in Germany in 1938 and more specifically, Emil’s family?
2. Both Emil and Friedrich spend time in their special spot by the river. Describe what each of the boys do there. How do they react to each other?
3. Friedrich’s Uncle Hilmar believes that Friedrich should have a choice to belong or not to belong to the Jungvolk. Do you agree or disagree? If Friedrich had a choice, what do you think he would choose?
4. Why was Friedrich concerned about Günter finding out about his Uncle Hilmar?
5. What qualities does Günter find important in Jungvolk boys?
6. Ari was chosen to be the flagbearer in the children’s parade by Mr. Gruen. Why did Günter and the other Jungvolk boys have a problem with this?

7. So many spectators watched the incident with Ari at the parade and didn't intervene. Why do you think that happened? Would you have intervened? Do you think it would have made a difference? How?
8. Historians debate the extent to which German citizens actively supported, challenged or just went along with Hitler's theories on racial superiority. What did Friedrich think?
9. Friedrich lived in a time when many adults, parents and teachers encouraged young people to discriminate based on race. How do you think you would have thought and behaved in 1938 Germany?
10. Uncle Hilmar asks Friedrich what his "purest truth" is. What is a purest truth? Do you have a purest truth? If so, what is it?
11. Why, according to Uncle Hilmar, does Friedrich's mother clean all the time?
12. At the end of chapter 15, Friedrich feels as if he has lost "his friend, his uncle, his country, and himself" all in one day. Explain why he feels he has lost each of these using evidence from the book to support your answers.
13. In chapter 16, Emil's Mama asks, "We are all still civilized, aren't we?" What is the historic significance of this question given it is October, 1938?
14. What happens to Brutus, the dog?
15. Have you ever had a "certainty" that you knew was right, like Emil in chapter 16?
16. Why does Emil throw up on himself? What did he want Friedrich to do in response?
17. The Rosens receive wonderful news at the end of Part Two. What is it?
18. Why couldn't Uncle Leo attain a visa to go to Paraguay with the rest of Emil's family?



### Making Connections

The harassment that both Sarah Rosen and Ari Goldberg encounter in Part Two of *Crushing the Red Flowers* takes on a more complex meaning against the backdrop of the rise of the Nazi regime. Sadly, many still endure such ridicule and violence today.

- ) What is bullying?
- ) Do you believe Sarah is bullied in *Crushing the Red Flowers*? By whom?
- ) What about Ari Goldberg?
- ) How do each respond to the bullying?
- ) What are some other ways Sarah and Ari could respond to the bullying?
- ) Have you ever been bullied? What happened?
- ) How did you respond to the bullying?
- ) Why do you think many grownups and children stood by and did not intervene on Ari's behalf?
- ) Have you ever seen a friend or someone else be bullied? What could you do in that situation to help?
- ) Do you think there is violence in silence? Explain your answer, using evidence from Part Two to support your stand.

## Part Three

1. What is the purpose of the vase of dried poppies in Friedrich's window?

2. In chapter 17, Friedrich's mother says, "we all have our parts to play." What does she mean by this? What part does Friedrich's father play? His mother? Friedrich?
3. Explain in your own words what happened to Ernst vom Rath. What is your opinion about it? Why did Herschel Grynszpan, the Jewish teenager who shot him, do it? Should he be punished? Why did some people think all Jewish people should be punished? Give your opinion based on the information you have.
4. Conduct research and explain Kristallnacht (the Pogrom) in your own words.
5. What prompts the Rosen family to hide in the potato room? Mama and Vati have very different opinions of whether they should hide or not. Explain how each feels, based on their words and actions in chapter 18.
6. Why do Vati and Emil leave the potato room? Where do they go? Do you think they made a good decision?
7. What is meant by "in the spider web of facts, many a truth is strangled"? Why do you think Friedrich's mother says this to Günter?
8. Explain Friedrich's internal conflict during Kristallnacht. What causes him to throw so many rocks? What prompts Friedrich to try and help Emil?
9. How does Friedrich help Vati and Emil at the river?
10. Why does Friedrich help Emil's family in the potato room?
11. Why do Vati and Emil return to the apartment before Friedrich tells them it's safe? Do you think this was the right decision? Why or why not?
12. In an early chapter, Friedrich felt reassured that the way of the world was right when he watched the river correct a muddy mess. How did his belief change by chapter 21?

13. Discuss some of the ways the Nazi government took power away from Emil's family. Was there any way to fight the mandates?
14. At the end of chapter 24, Emil says of his mother, "there was an expression on her face . . . It reminded him of Ari on parade day." What does this mean?
15. Friedrich said he, "lost part of himself . . . and gained a new part." Explain what this means using evidence from the book as support for your answer.
16. Why does Günter want to keep the Rosens from getting on the boat to Paraguay?
17. How does Friedrich save the Rosens and get them to the train station on time?
18. Imagine that it is two years after the events of *Crushing the Red Flowers*. What is Friedrich's life like? How have things changed or stayed the same? What about Emil's life? How have things changed or stayed the same?

### Further Historical Research

Elsbeth Lewin lived through Kristallnacht as a child. She was 14 years old at the time.

Watch a video of her memory of that night on Facing History and Ourselves here:

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/video/elsbeth-lewin-remembers-kristallnacht>

Are there any similarities between her experience to that of Emil's and his family? Explain your answer using the events of the book as evidence.

Then, write your own fictional account of Kristallnacht in which Elsbeth and her family interact with both Emil and the Rosens and the boys of the Jungvolk, including Friedrich. Include both details in the historical account, as well as details from the book, to make your writing come to life.

## After You Read

Below are a few final project ideas for the conclusion of *Crushing the Red Flowers*.

1. Friedrich's eyebrow twitch symbolizes the German pre-war conscience. Discuss the times it twitched in the novel.
2. Why do you think so many Germans embrace Nazi ideology in the novel?
3. Have you ever heard conflicting facts, maybe two points of view to the same story? How can you find the truth?
4. What can we learn from 1938, so that we don't repeat it in the future?
5. Which character would you like to meet in real life?
6. If you could give *Crushing the Red Flowers* a different title, what would it be? Explain your answer using specifics from the book for support.
7. Read the quote from author James Patterson on the back cover. Do you agree with him?
8. What is one thing you would ask the author if you could talk to her?
9. Several themes run through *Crushing the Red Flowers*:

truth	immigration	refugees
hope/uncertainty	bystanders	family
friendship	a place of one's own/displacement	
cooperation/loyalty	government opposition	

Choose one of these themes on which to base a 500-word essay.

- a. How is this theme evident in the characters and events of the novel?
- b. What can readers take away from *Crushing the Red Flowers* in relation to this theme?

10. Create a book trailer for *Crushing the Red Flowers*. Provide music, visuals, and words to create an overall feel for the book.

### Further Historical Research

Conduct Internet and library research on ONE of the following:

- ) Nuremberg Race Laws
- ) The Évian Conference
- ) Baldur von Schirach
- ) The Reichstag fire
- ) Night of the Long Knives
- ) Beer Hall Putsch
- ) The Enabling Act
- ) The Jewish store boycott
- ) The Reich Chamber of Culture
- ) Treaty of Versailles
- ) Herschel Grynszpan
- ) Paul von Hindenburg

Describe the event, its historic context, and how it fits into the plot of this novel.