# Heidenau bans street plaques for Nazi victims

LEVEL B1


Photo: Unsplash

## I. WARM-UP

1. How does your town remember past events or people?
2. Should memorials be on streets or in special places? Why?
3. Have you ever noticed a small plaque on a building or pavement?

## II. KEY VOCABULARY

**memorial**
Something that helps people remember a person or event.

**plaque**
A flat metal plate with words or names on it.

**ban**
To officially stop something from being allowed.

**councillor**
An elected member of a town or city council.

**cemetery**
A place where people are buried.

**donation**
Money given to help a project or cause.

**survivor**
A person who has lived through a very hard or dangerous event.

**extremist**
A person or group with very extreme political ideas.

## III. READING

A wave of criticism has followed a decision in Heidenau, a town near Dresden in Saxony, to ban “stumbling stone” memorials for victims of the Nazis. Germany’s education minister, Karin Prien, called the move a scandal. Since the 1990s, Stolpersteine have spread across Europe, including Germany and Austria.

The small brass plaques are often set outside victims’ homes or workplaces and are frequently funded by donations. Councillors from the AfD and the conservative CDU in Heidenau voted for the ban.

In Saxony, the AfD has been labelled extreme-right by intelligence services, and some branches are classed as extremist, which the party rejects. The council motion said some citizens felt this kind of commemoration was inappropriate.

It said future memorials should be placed at the town’s Nordfriedhof cemetery so people cannot step on them. CDU politician Karin Prien criticised her own party’s role. Holocaust survivor Charlotte Knobloch also opposed removing memorials from the cityscape.

*Reading text adapted from reporting by* **BBC News***: “German town bans 'stumbling stone' memorials to...”. Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

## IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which town decided to ban the stumbling stone memorials?

2. Who called the decision a scandal?

3. Which parties' councillors voted for the ban in Heidenau?

4. Where did the motion say future memorials should be placed?

5. Why did the council want memorials moved to the cemetery?

## V. DISCUSSION

1. Are street memorials better than memorials in cemeteries? Why?

2. What places in your city should have memorial plaques, and why?

3. How should towns decide where remembrance belongs?

4. Can small memorials in daily life change public attitudes?

## VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

**Present perfect vs past simple**

Present perfect = have/has + past participle: use it for past actions that continue or have results now. Past simple = past form: use it for finished actions at a specific past time (yesterday, last year).

> *"A wave of criticism* **has followed** *a decision in Heidenau."*
>
> *"Councillors from the AfD and the conservative CDU in Heidenau* **voted** *for the ban."*

## VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

**Complete each sentence with the present perfect or past simple of the verb in brackets.**

1. Since the ban, residents (express) ___ concern. _____
2. In 2012, my grandmother (see) ___ her first stumbling stone. _____
3. Since the 1990s, the brass plaques (spread) ___ across Europe. _____
4. Last year my sister (visit) ___ a memorial in Berlin. _____
5. So far this year, I (notice) ___ three plaques near my home. _____

# Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


Photo: Unsplash

## I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10–12 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or check: memorial, plaque, councillor, cemetery, donation, survivor, extremist, cityscape; show a photo of a Stolperstein if possible.
- Run the reading in two passes: gist first, then scan for names and places. Sensitivity note: the story involves the Holocaust and Nazi victims; start discussion in pairs and allow students to speak about the news rather than personal experiences.
- Differentiate by task: stronger students summarise the arguments for and against street plaques in 3–4 sentences; others highlight key lines in the text and report them to a partner.

## II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. If opinions split, pair students with an opposite view and ask for one reason each.
2. Prompt for local examples: buildings, pavements, stations, schools; then ask why those places.
3. Have groups list two criteria (visibility, respect, safety) and compare lists.
4. Ask for examples from other countries and what feelings such memorials can create.

## III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

**Debate:** In teams, prepare 2-minute arguments for or against moving plaques to a cemetery, then rebut.

**Writing:** Write a 90-word public statement from Heidenau's council explaining the decision.

## IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

**Comprehension questions:** short factual answers from the text.

**Grammar exercise:** Present perfect vs past simple

**Discussion:** open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

# Answer Key

**TEACHERS ONLY**

These answers are for teachers only. Please do not share this page with students.


Photo: Unsplash

## IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which town decided to ban the stumbling stone memorials?
   Heidenau, near Dresden in Saxony.
2. Who called the decision a scandal?
   Germany's education minister, Karin Prien.
3. Which parties' councillors voted for the ban in Heidenau?
   Councillors from the AfD and the CDU.
4. Where did the motion say future memorials should be placed?
   At the town's Nordfriedhof cemetery.
5. Why did the council want memorials moved to the cemetery?
   So people cannot step directly on them.

## V. DISCUSSION

**Open answers.** Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

## VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

**Key point:** Present perfect = have/has + past participle: use it for past actions that continue or have results now. Past simple = past form: use it for finished actions at a specific past time (yesterday, last year).

*"A wave of criticism* **has followed** *a decision in Heidenau."*

*"Councillors from the AfD and the conservative CDU in Heidenau* **voted** *for the ban."*

## VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the present perfect or past simple of the verb in brackets.

1. Since the ban, residents ___ concern. **have expressed**
2. In 2012, my grandmother ___ her first stumbling stone. **saw**
3. Since the 1990s, the brass plaques ___ across Europe. **have spread**
4. Last year my sister ___ a memorial in Berlin. **visited**
5. So far this year, I ___ three plaques near my home. **have noticed**