

## Unit Four: Jewish Resistance

### Background Information for Teachers:

When studying about the Holocaust, students frequently ask, “Why didn’t the Jews fight back?” It may appear at first glance that Jews didn’t resist, but this is not true. They resisted as much as any other group under Nazi occupation. Most often, they had to act under circumstances that could hardly have been less suited for such activities. They used the methods available to them according to local situations and individual circumstances. Resistance was usually carried out against great odds and with incomplete information about the overall situation. They had little or no outside help and often had to contend with the anti-Semitism of others who were also under occupation.

There are several problems with the question, “Why didn’t the Jews fight back?” Key lessons about the Holocaust emerge from legitimate responses to this question.

1. Which Jews? (Part One) The Holocaust did not descend upon all Jews in the same way. The situation facing German Jews developed slowly over the course of a decade. They loved their country and many couldn’t give it up easily, in spite of Nazi rule. The situation facing eastern Jews was very different. They faced invaders and occupiers. Even so, they couldn’t necessarily rely on non-Jews for assistance. Some helped, but traditional anti-Judaism poisoned the attitudes of many others who should have been natural allies against a common enemy. In some areas, Jews had only days or weeks to understand the nature of events, since the Nazis imposed their destructive program much more quickly under occupation than they did in Germany. In Western Europe, Jews were accepted in national resistance groups, but distinctions were often made between “native” and “foreign” Jews.
2. Which Jews? (Part 2) Jews across Europe were not a homogeneous group. There were various political, social, economic, and religious philosophies among Jews. Many of these overlapped with non-Jewish groups as well. The way that a person or group chose to respond to the Nazis naturally arose out of their overall worldview, not just their religious identity.
3. Which Jews? (Part Three) Jews are also individuals. Each person had to respond according to his/her own abilities and circumstances. Age, gender, family status, occupation, and specific personality traits all played a part in helping a person decide what to do. Obviously, it is ridiculous to oversimplify the topic of Jewish resistance to the Holocaust by framing it as a single question, such as “Why didn’t the Jews fight back?”
4. What was the goal of resistance? Some people think of resistance only in terms of military fighting. For most Jews, the goal was individual and collective survival, not killing the enemy. They had no army. They were greatly outnumbered and out-gunned. Military resistance, except in places where guerrilla activity was possible, was suicidal. Consequently, fighting resistance usually occurred only after the Nazi mass murder program became known. With survival eliminated as unlikely, resistance often became a choice of the manner of death.
5. The question, “Why didn’t the Jews fight back?” is somewhat disrespectful. It implies that Jews didn’t respond as they should have or as we would have. The question hints at the idea that there is something wrong with them - that they are *fundamentally* different from the rest of us. This brings us perilously close to the Nazi lies and stereotypes that disparaged Jews. As teachers, we must help students see through such distortions. It would be tragic if Holocaust education perpetuated the very ideas that made the Holocaust possible in the first place.

It may be easier to think about Jewish resistance during the Holocaust if we look at the various types of resistance. There were basically two types of resistance and two modes of application.

- Active resistance describes doing something to thwart the enemies goals.
- Passive resistance describes a refusal to act - not doing what the enemy wants.
- Both types of resistance can be carried out in direct or indirect modes. Direct resistance is carried out against the enemy. Indirect resistance is carried out in support of the oppressed individual or community.

These categories represent a paradigm of resistance. They are not mutually exclusive. There are many acts of resistance that would fit into more than one category. The main goal of this model is to broaden our thinking to recognize the validity of the various resistance strategies. The following chart illustrates some resistance possibilities.

	<b>Active</b>	<b>Passive</b>
<b>Direct</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising</li> <li>• Death Camp revolts at Treblinka, Sobibor, and Auschwitz</li> <li>• Fighting as Jewish partisans and as members of national resistance groups</li> <li>• Sabotage during labor projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refusing to report for deportation</li> <li>• Hiding</li> <li>• Refusing to wear the Jewish star / Concealing Jewish identity</li> </ul>
<b>Indirect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smuggling supplies or information into the ghetto or camp</li> <li>• Producing or obtaining false identification papers</li> <li>• Engaging in clandestine religious, educational, or cultural activities in spite of prohibitions</li> <li>• Escaping from camps, ghettos, or Nazi-occupied areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survival – Refusal to give up in spite of conditions designed to lead to death</li> </ul>

## Brainstorming Activity

This activity is designed to be an introduction to the topic of Jewish resistance to the Holocaust. Unfortunately, some people have the idea that Jews didn't fight back against what the Nazis were trying to do to them. Others may recognize examples of Jewish resistance, but define it much too narrowly.

### **Objectives:**

Students will:

1. Brainstorm a list of activities that they think should be labeled as resistance.
2. Broaden their definition of resistance by defining its goals.
3. Broaden their understanding of resistance by considering the feasibility of various acts under prevailing circumstances.

### **Materials:**

The only item needed for this activity is the [Jewish Resistance Possibilities Chart](#). You may choose to give students copies of the chart, or you may prefer to use a larger version on the chalkboard or overhead projector.

### **Procedures:**

1. Begin by asking students to define what "Resistance" means. Write a few of the suggestions on the board.
2. Using the student definitions as a starting point, ask students to define what they think is meant by the phrase, "Jewish resistance to the Holocaust". Most suggestions will probably have to do with fighting, at least at first. Some students may begin to add nuances to the definitions that suggest a broader range of meaning.
3. Now ask students to brainstorm a list of all the activities they can think of that would fit their definitions.
4. Now that you have a list, you can begin helping students to broaden their understanding of Jewish resistance. You can do this in two ways.
  - First, ask students to list all of the possible goals Jews might have had under the circumstances of Nazi rule. There are quite a few reasonable goals to be suggested. Trying to achieve any of them can legitimately be called resistance.
  - Second, introduce the resistance model on the transparency sheet. Give plenty of examples (not related to the Holocaust or war) to illustrate what is meant by "active", "passive", "direct", and "indirect". A good source for examples would be a football game. Passing for a touchdown against the other team would be "active-direct". Working hard in practice to become a better player would be "active-indirect". Not responding to a provocation by an opposing player (so that he draws the penalty flag, not you) would be "passive-direct". Resting between plays would be "passive-indirect".

5. Use the transparency or draw the chart on the chalkboard. Ask students to place their earlier suggestions into the appropriate spaces on the chart. Accept new suggestions for categories that were not previously well represented.
6. If you have time remaining, write the following poem on the chalkboard:

**Blessed is the Match**

**Blessed is the match consumed  
in kindling flame.**

**Blessed is the flame that burns  
in the secret fastness of the heart.**

**Blessed is the heart with strength to stop  
its beating for honor's sake.**

**Blessed is the match consumed  
in kindling flame.**

The author of this poem was Hannah Senesh. She was a Hungarian Jewish girl. As a result of growing anti-Semitism in Europe, she decided to go to Palestine in 1939. She would have been safe from the Nazis there, but when Germany invaded her country in 1944, she joined the British paratroopers. She was dropped behind enemy lines with the mission of aiding the resistance in Hungary. Just before she went into Hungary, she gave this poem to a friend. Unfortunately, she was captured, tortured, and finally executed, but never revealed the secrets the Nazis were seeking. What types of resistance did she engage in?

**Extension Activity:**

After reading and interpreting the poem above, ask students for suggestions on how they can join in the resistance to the Holocaust today. One possible answer is to remember and honor the victims whom the Nazis sought to dehumanize and destroy. Students could write short poems in honor of specific Holocaust victims to preserve their memory.

## **Resistance in Diaries and Documents**

We may study the efforts of Jewish resistance fighters, but understanding is difficult, because our lives and circumstances are so different from theirs. One way we can try to bridge this gulf is to see resistance through their eyes – to read about it through their words. This activity is designed to help students gain insight into Jewish resistance by allowing them to encounter it in the immediacy of primary source documents.

### **Objectives:**

Students will:

1. Read primary source accounts from and about Jews engaged in “fighting” resistance.
2. Analyze the conditions under which resistance was carried out.
3. Evaluate resistance activities for effectiveness and possible alternatives.

### **Materials:**

1. Handouts: “Diaries and Documents of Resistance - Readings # 111 (Handout 1) , 138 (Handout 2), 209 (Handout 3) 145 (Handout 4) and 210 (Handout 5\_” reprinted from Documents on the Holocaust, Yad Vashem, 1981.
2. Worksheet: “Discussion Questions from Diaries and Documents of Resistance” (Handout 6 – two pages)
3. The text – Tell Them We Remember: The Story of the Holocaust

### **Procedures:**

1. Introduce the subject by reading the short selections on pages 70, 72, and 74 from Tell Them We Remember: The Story of the Holocaust, or summarize the content.
2. Introduce the activity by telling students that they are going to learn about Jewish resistance through the words of people who were there. Give the following background information about the quotes:
  - The first (#111) is from the diary of Emanuel Ringelblum describing the girls who were couriers for the “Underground”
  - The second (#138) and third (#209) are public appeals to support the resistance from the fighting organizations in the Warsaw and Vilna Ghettos, respectively.
  - The fourth (#145) is the last letter of Mordecai Anielewicz, Warsaw Ghetto Revolt Commander
  - The fifth (#210) is from the diary of a partisan fighter in the forests.
3. Read the quotations aloud or have students read them silently.
4. Pass out the worksheet and allow students time to complete the questions.
5. Discuss the responses in class.

### **Extension Activities:**

1. The movie Escape from Sobibor is an excellent portrayal of the prisoner revolt in the Sobibor death camp. It can be borrowed from the Holocaust Memorial Center, but should also be available at any commercial video rental store. It is 120 minutes long, so you might encourage interested students to obtain the movie and view it at home.
2. You may want to have students examine maps #20 and 21 from the Holocaust: Maps and Photographs to analyze the impact of geographic factors on resistance activities.
3. Document # 211 from Documents on the Holocaust gives a much more detailed look at partisan activities. The brief action reports give good insight into the types of resistance that the partisans were able to carry out.

## **“Spiritual Resistance” in Poetry and Song**

The term “spiritual resistance” is often used to describe religious, educational, and cultural activities designed to sustain the Jewish community in the face of Nazi oppression. It is sometimes considered to be the opposite of fighting, but in reality, the two are complimentary. Resistance fighters in the ghettos and in partisan groups faced many difficulties. The most obvious were the superior numbers, supplies, and weaponry of the enemy. Trying to persevere in the face of these obstacles was a daunting task. It was vital for the people in these circumstances to keep up their morale. Music and other creative arts played a vital role in this struggle and gives us an opportunity to gain insight into their lives that goes deeper than an historical account of their deeds.

### **Objectives:**

Students will:

1. Examine the role of music and lyrics in communication, persuasion, and inspiration.
2. Interpret the songs as primary sources, analyzing the lyrics, instrumentation, and circumstances of composition for insight into the situation facing the resistance fighters.
3. Seek out and bring to class contemporary examples of music used to persuade and inspire.

### **Materials:**

1. CD Player
2. Rise Up and Fight: Songs of the Jewish Partisans
3. Handout Sheet with Lyrics - *The Jewish Partisan* (Handout 7), *Never Say That You Have Reached The Final Road* (Handout 8)
4. “Spiritual Resistance” Worksheet (Handout 9)

### **Procedures:**

1. Introduce the topic by asking students to list reasons why people listen to music. Write the list of responses on the board. The first responses will probably be entertainment oriented. If necessary, ask students why Jewish resistance fighters might have listened to music.
2. Play the songs (#13 and #17 on the CD) through one time each before students have the lyrics. Ask them to guess what the words are saying from the style of the music. Later, you can inform the students that the music was not new, but they were Russian folk tunes adapted to these lyrics.
3. Pass out the handouts with the lyrics and the worksheet.
4. Play the songs again and ask students to answer the questions on the “Spiritual Resistance” worksheet.
5. Discuss the worksheet responses.

### **Extension Activity:**

Ask students to find examples of contemporary music that are used to persuade or inspire. Have them bring samples to class to share. Don't forget to set appropriate limits to guide students in their selections.

If any students want to, allow them to compose a short musical and lyrical phrase dealing with a subject of their choice.

## **Jewish Resistance - Jewish Resistance: Group Project**

The study of Jewish resistance to the Holocaust becomes more meaningful when its variety is appreciated.

### **Objectives:**

Students will:

1. Conduct research together with a group of fellow students into a specific sub-topic of Jewish resistance, using the text, The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance as a starting point.
2. Prepare material based on research for a class presentation.
3. Compare research results with those from other student groups to draw general conclusions about the possibilities and efficacy of Jewish resistance.
4. Recognize the impact of the topic of resistance on asserting the dignity and humanity of the victims.

### **Materials:**

1. The text, The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance by Bea Stadler
2. The Documentary Photo Aids collections (in the trunk) Caution: Be sure to preview these photos. Take out any you are not comfortable having students view or use.
3. Resistance during the Holocaust – produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and found in the packet of USHMM materials in the trunk. The mini-posters in the packet may be useful, too.
4. Any other materials from the trunk, the school library, public libraries, or any other available source to facilitate research.
5. Handout: Oral Report Summary Sheet (Handout 11)

### **Procedures:**

1. Set up independent workstations in your classroom so students can use materials from the trunk to do research and prepare their group project reports. Library and Internet sources can be used as well.
2. Introduce this activity by telling students that they are going to do research about the many people and groups that resisted the Holocaust. Tell them that they will be preparing oral reports to present in class.
3. Inform students that each group report will consist of the following:
  - Identification and explanation of the type of resistance the group studied.
  - Explanation of the specific acts of resistance involved.
  - Explanation of the difficulties, dangers, and dilemmas faced in this type of resistance.

- Brief descriptions of several individuals or group members engaged in this type of resistance and what happened to them. First hand accounts or recollections would be a great addition to this part of the report.
  - Display of any visual aids that illustrate the material in the report (i.e. an appropriate photo from the trunk collection, mini-poster set, “Maps and Photos” book, etc.) Note: Every group may not be able to find appropriate visuals.
4. Each report should last from 5 to 15 minutes depending on the amount of available material available to the group. Each member of the group should be responsible for one segment of the report lasting from 1 to 3 minutes.
  5. Allow students to group themselves by choosing a topic, or group the students yourself. You will probably want to keep the number of students in each group fairly even (perhaps 3-5 students apiece). The resistance topics covered by the text are as follows:
    - Chapter 6: Spiritual resistance carried out through the teachings and under the guidance of Rabbis.
    - Chapter 7: “Fighting Resistance” as seen in the example of Mordecai Anielewicz.
    - Chapter 9: “Fighting Resistance” as seen in the example of Itzik Wittenberg and the Joint Defense Committee in the Vilna Ghetto (Note: This chapter also includes the concept of partisan fighters operating from bases in the forests.)
    - Chapter 10: Resistance (strengthening the community) through help to the disadvantaged as exemplified by Janusz Korczak and the Warsaw Ghetto Orphanage)
    - Chapter 11: The Doctor Warriors
    - Chapter 12: Women Fighters
    - Chapter 13: The Underground Press
    - Chapter 15: Resistance from within concentration camps (Note: This chapter deals with the spiritual resistance of clandestine religious observances, but could be broadened to include other acts of resistance from within camps.)
    - Chapter 19: Resistance by Jewish fighters coming in to Nazi occupied territory from outside.
    - Chapter 20: Resistance through escape. This chapter deals exclusively with Jews leaving Europe to go to Palestine, but could be broadened to include other destinations as well. Though the motivations in going to another place may not be completely the same as going to the land of Israel, both represented moving beyond the reach of the Nazis.

The following resistance topics also represent good choices, but may require outside sources to find enough research material:

- Jewish fighters in national resistance movements in Western European countries.
- Resistance by hiding

- Resistance by concealing Jewish identity and/or helping others to do so.
- Specific Jewish resistance groups (i.e. The Bielski Partisans, The Herbert Baum Group in Germany, etc.)

Note to teachers: Obviously, the topics for this project are flexible in that they can be defined broadly or with a high degree of specificity. There is a considerable degree of overlap to the information in the text chapters. Also, the activity can be brief (using only the text and the students' responses to the questions at the end of the chapters) or extensive (involving much independent research and work outside of class).

6. Allow students time to work on their research and presentations.
7. On the day that you choose for the group presentations, pass out the "Oral Report Summary Sheet". Instruct students to fill it out with brief responses during the oral reports.

### **Extension Activity:**

Studying Jewish resistance to the Holocaust may create interest in other "freedom fighters" from other times and places. For example, the activities of the Jewish "underground press" may evoke interest in figures from diverse periods in American history (i.e.-John Peter Zenger, Thomas Paine, Elijah Lovejoy, Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Upton Sinclair, etc.) Students should be encouraged to pursue these "parallel" interests. The idea is not to draw direct comparisons between different events in history, but to further explore the motivations and actions of people struggling for justice.

## THE GIRL COURIERS OF THE UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT

May 19, 1942

The heroic girls, Chajka [Grosman], Frumke [Plotnicka] and others — theirs is a story that calls for the pen of a great writer. They are venturesome, courageous girls who travel here and there across Poland to cities and towns, carrying Aryan papers which describe them as Polish or Ukrainian. One of them even wears a cross, which she never leaves off and misses when she is in the ghetto. Day by day they face the greatest dangers, relying completely on their Aryan appearance and the kerchiefs they tie around their heads. They accept the most dangerous missions and carry them out without a murmur, without a moment's hesitation. If there is need for someone to travel to Vilna, Bialystok, Lvov, Kowel, Lublin, Czestochowa, or Radom to smuggle in such forbidden things as illegal publications, goods, money, they do it all as though it were the most natural thing. If there are comrades to be rescued from Vilna, Lublin, or other cities, they take the job on themselves. Nothing deters them, nothing stops them. If it is necessary to make friends with the German responsible for a train so as to travel beyond the borders of the Government-General, which is allowed only for people with special permits — they do it quite simply, as though it were their profession. They travel from city to city, where no representative of any Jewish institution has reached, such as Volhynia and Lithuania. They were the first to bring the news of the tragedy in Vilna. They were the first to take back messages of greeting and encouragement to the survivors in Vilna. How many times did they look death in the eye? How many times were they arrested and searched? But their luck held. "Those who go on an errand of mercy will meet no evil." With what modesty and simplicity do they deliver their reports on what they accomplished during their travels on trains where Christians, men and women, were picked up and taken away for work in Germany. Jewish women have written a shining page in the history of the present World War. The Chajkes and the Frumkes will take first place in this history. These girls do not know what it is to rest. They have hardly arrived from Czestochowa where they took forbidden goods, and in a few hours they would move on again: they do it without a moment's hesitation, and without a minute's rest.

**CALL TO RESISTANCE BY THE JEWISH FIGHTING  
ORGANIZATION IN THE WARSAW GHETTO,  
JANUARY 1943**

**To the Jewish Masses in the Ghetto**

On January 22, 1943, six months will have passed since the deportations from Warsaw began. We all remember well the days of terror during which 300,000 of our brothers and sisters were cruelly put to death in the death camp of Treblinka. Six months have passed of life in constant fear of death, not knowing what the next day may bring. We have received information from all sides about the destruction of the Jews in the Government-General, in Germany, in the occupied territories. When we listen to this bitter news we wait for our own hour to come, every day and every moment. Today we must understand that the Nazi murderers have let us live only because they want to make use of our capacity to work to our last drop of blood and sweat, to our last breath. We are slaves. And when the slaves are no longer profitable, they are killed. Everyone among us must understand that, and everyone among us must remember it always.

During the past few weeks certain people have spread stories about letters that were said to have been received from Jews deported from Warsaw, who were said to be in labor camps near Minsk or Bobruisk. *Jews in your masses, do not believe these tales. They are spread by Jews who are working for the Gestapo.* The blood-stained murderers have a particular aim in doing this: to reassure the Jewish population in order that later the next deportation can be carried out without difficulty, with a minimum of force and without losses to the Germans. They want the Jews not to prepare hiding-places and not to resist. *Jews, do not repeat these lying tales.*

Do not help the [Nazi] agents. The Gestapo's dastardly people will get their just deserts. *Jews in your masses, the hour is near. You must be prepared to resist, not to give yourselves up like sheep to slaughter. Not even one Jew must go to the train. People who cannot resist actively must offer passive resistance, that is, by hiding.* We have now received information from Lvov that the Jewish Police there itself carried out the deportation of 3,000 Jews. Such things will not happen again in Warsaw. The killing of Lejkin proves it. Now our slogan must be:

*Let everyone be ready to die like a man!*

*January 1943*

PROCLAMATION BY THE F.P.O. CALLING FOR REVOLT  
IN VILNA, SEPTEMBER 1, 1943 \*

**Jews, Prepare for Armed Resistance!**

The German and Lithuanian hangmen have reached the gates of the ghetto. They will murder us all. They will take us, group by group, through the gates.

That is how they took them in their hundreds on the Day of Atonement.

That is how they took them at the time of the White, the Yellow and the Pink papers.\*\*

That is how they took our brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, our children.

That is how they took tens of thousands away to their death. *But we will not go!*

We will not let them take us like animals to slaughter.

*Jews, prepare for armed resistance!*

Do not believe the false assurances of the murderers, do not believe the words of the traitors. Whoever is taken through the gate of the ghetto has only one road ahead—Ponary. *And Ponary is death.*

*Jews, we have nothing to lose.*

Death is certain. Who can still believe that he will survive when the murderers kill systematically? The hand of the hangman will reach out to each of us. Neither hiding nor cowardice will save lives.

*Only armed resistance can save our lives and honor.*

*Brothers, it is better to fall in battle in the ghetto than to be led like sheep to Ponary.*

Know that in the ghetto there is an organized Jewish force which will rise up with arms in its hands.

*Rise up for the armed resistance!*

Don't hide in the *malines*. You will fall there like mice in the hands of the murderers.

**Jewish masses**

*Out into the streets!*

Those who have no arms get hold of an axe.

Those who haven't an axe take hold of an iron bar or a cudgel!

— *For our murdered children,*

— *For our parents,*

— *For Ponary.*

*Strike the murderers!*

In every street, in every yard, in every room, within the ghetto and outside the ghetto.

Strike the dogs!

Jews, we have nothing to lose. *We can save our lives only if we kill the murderers.*

Long live liberty! Long live armed resistance!

Death to the murderers!

Command Staff

United Partisans Organization — F.P.O. (*Fareinikte Partizaner Organizatsie*)

Vilna Ghetto

September 1, 1943

Morshid Archives, D. 1382.

\* See Document 197.

\*\* Documents of various types that were distributed in the ghetto.

**THE LAST LETTER FROM MORDECAI ANIELEWICZ,  
WARSAW GHETTO REVOLT COMMANDER,\***

**APRIL 23, 1943**

It is impossible to put into words what we have been through. One thing is clear, what happened exceeded our boldest dreams. The Germans ran twice from the ghetto. One of our companies held out for 40 minutes and another — for more than 6 hours. The mine set in the “brushmakers” area exploded. Several of our companies attacked the dispersing Germans. Our losses in manpower are minimal. That is also an achievement. Y [Yechiel] fell. He fell a hero, at the machine-gun. *I feel that great things are happening and what we dared do is of great, enormous importance. . . .*

Beginning from today we shall shift over to the partisan tactic. Three battle companies will move out tonight, with two tasks: reconnaissance and obtaining arms. Do you remember, short-range weapons are of no use to us. We use such weapons only rarely. What we need urgently: grenades, rifles, machine-guns and explosives.

It is impossible to describe the conditions under which the Jews of the ghetto are now living. Only a few will be able to hold out. The remainder will die sooner or later. Their fate is decided. In almost all the hiding places in which thousands are concealing themselves it is not possible to light a candle for lack of air.

With the aid of our transmitter we heard a marvelous report on our fighting by the “Shavit” radio station. The fact that we are remembered beyond the ghetto walls encourages us in our struggle. Peace go with you, my friend! Perhaps we may still meet again! *The dream of my life has risen to become fact. Self-defense in the ghetto will have been a reality. Jewish armed resistance and revenge are facts. I have been a witness to the magnificent, heroic fighting of Jewish men of battle.*

M. Anielewicz

Ghetto, April 23, 1943

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[M. Kann], *Na oczach swiata* (“In the Eyes of the World”), Zamosc, 1932 [i.e., Warsaw, 1943], pp. 33-34.

\* Written to Yitzhak Cukierman.

**LIFE OF JEWISH PARTISANS AND JEWISH FAMILY  
CAMPS IN THE FOREST, FROM A DIARY BY A  
JEWISH PARTISAN, 1942-1943**

August 12, 1942

...The idea of the forest returned and came to life. After the second mass-murder all of us were certain that the Germans made no difference between one Jew and another... They deceived the Judenrat and the Jewish Police when they promised them that they would stay alive if they helped to carry out the slaughter, and in the end they killed them too. Once more we began to search for ways of escape outside the ghetto...

The first to escape were Jews from the neighborhood Naliboki Forest. They disappeared and nothing more was heard of them. The people from Zhetl also went, to Lipiczanka Forest, and they were joined by some from Nowogrodek, who returned after a while to take with them their relatives and friends. From them we heard details of life in the forest. They have arms, they carry out attacks on Germans traveling on the roads; the peasants are afraid of them and supply them with food. There are Russian partisans in the forest who live on good terms with the Jews and carry out joint attacks on the Germans with them.

Young boys of 15 to 17 snatch arms from the Germans and fix stocks to pistols and rifles. A small group got together and moved out to the Belskis. Two of them came back to the ghetto. They would have nothing to do with anyone there, and refused to speak to their former friends—weren't they partisans? They went back to the forest and took with them their relatives, wives and acquaintances.

[1943]

As a result of our many attacks on the Germans in the area of our camp, a German assault was to be expected any day. Information reached us that the Germans knew where we were. The Staff decided to dissolve the separate groups and to re-establish the Brigade.

At the beginning of April all the groups were ordered to leave their valleys and move within 24 hours to Brozova Forest, in Stara-Huta.

We packed our belongings, filled our knapsacks, and fastened our blankets on top of them. The cooking gear and other things were loaded on carts and we moved out. The night was cloudy and the sky full of rain. The damp penetrated into the very marrow of our bones. The dry, bare branches of the young trees waved and bent hither and thither. Our thoughts were black too. Many of us had been lost in our wanderings from forest to forest, from base camp to base camp. They had fallen, and who knew what awaited us at the next base?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

**Jewish Resistance in Diaries and Documents – Questions**

Directions: Read the quotes contained in the handouts and answer the following questions.

1. List some of the jobs the girl couriers did in the “Underground”.

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2. What were some of the dangers these girls faced?

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3. Why do you think girls (and these girls in particular) were well suited to their tasks?

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4. In document 138, what argument does the author use to try to convince his readers to join the resistance?

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5. What lie does the author warn his readers about?

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6. What two resistance choices does the author give his readers?

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7. In what way does the author of document 209 disagree with the author of # 138?

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8. Compare the tone of # 138 and # 209. Which one seems more aggressive and confident? Explain why this might be so. (Hint: A map of Eastern Europe gives one clue.)

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9. As he writes this letter, why is Mordecai Anielewicz justifiably proud?

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10. What problems does he describe? How will the fighters’ tactics change in response?



*Yid, du partizaner*  
THE JEWISH PARTISAN

Lyrics: Shmerke Kaczerginski  
Music: Anonymous

Set to the melody of a Russian folksong, Kaczerginski's text dates from late 1943, during the author's term of service with the Voroshilov Brigade in the Byelorussian forest of Narocz. Because of its ostensible security and relative distance from the action, the partisans' stronghold near Lake Narocz had earned the name "America."

Fun di getos tfise-vent-  
In di velder fraye,  
Onshtot keytn oyf di hent,  
Kh'halt a biks a naye.  
Oyf di oyfgabes mayn fraynt  
Kusht mir haldz un aksl,  
Mitn biks kh'bin nit fun haynt  
Fest tsunoyfgevaksn.

Veynik zaynen mir in tsol,  
Drayste vi milionen,  
Raysn mir oyf barg un tol  
Brikn, eshelonen.  
Der fashist fartsitert vert,  
Veyst nisht vu, fun vanen-  
Shturmen vi fun unter dr'erd-  
Yidn-partizaner.

S'vort "nekome" hot a zin,  
Ven mit blut farshraybst im,  
Far dem heylikn bagin  
Firn mir di shtraytn.  
Neyn, mir veln keynmol zayn  
Letste mohikaner,  
S'brengt der nakht-di zumenshayn,  
Der yid-der partizaner!

From the ghetto's prison walls  
Into the free forests,  
In place of chains around my hands,  
I carry a new rifle.  
On our rounds, this friend of mine  
Hugs my neck and shoulder;  
My rifle and I from this day  
Will be as one, united.

Few are we in number now,  
Yet bold as many millions;  
We blast away at hills and valleys,  
Convoys, columns, bridges.  
The fascist trembles in his boots,  
He can't guess where we come from;  
We charge at him from out of nowhere-  
Jewish partisans!

The word "revenge" means something  
When it's written down in blood;  
For our dawning, sacred day  
We'll fight on and on.  
No, one thing we will never be  
Is "Last of the Mohicans";  
Bringing sunshine to the night-  
The Jew, the partisan!

Zog nit keynmal az du greyt dem letstn veg

NEVER SAY THAT YOU HAVE REACHED THE FINAL ROAD

Lyrics: Hirsh Glik

Music: Dimitri and Daniel Pokrass

The ghetto buzzed with excitement when, over our hidden radio, we heard the news from the Polish underground: "Hello! Hello! The remaining Jews in the Warsaw ghetto have staged an armed rebellion against the Nazis! The ghetto is in flames!" Word of the uprising boosted our morale. We began to look proudly at the Nazis—and they soon understood what these looks signified. Doubtless many were thinking: "Perhaps I'll have to fight the Jews of Vilna! Perhaps I'll be killed!" On the evening of May first [1943], we staged a cultural event, "Springtime in Yiddish Literature." An innocent name, "Springtime." But the hundreds who came knew that their true purpose in attending was to celebrate May Day. Every aspect of the event was suffused with the spirit of Warsaw. [In the excitement,] I had not noticed Hirsh Glik standing by my side:

—What's new with you, Hirsh?

—I've just written a song. Do you want to hear it?

The next day, Hirsh stopped by quite early. "Listen closely," he said. He sang quietly at first, but with fiery passion. His eyes were ablaze. I wondered: Where does he find such unshakable faith? As his voice grew firmer, he began to hammer out the words, stamping his feet as if he were now on the march. I pressed his hand. "Wonderful, Hirsh, wonderful." Through his words, I felt the impact that the Warsaw uprising had made on him. Partisan Headquarters soon decided to designate Glik's song the official hymn of the underground fighters. But it was not necessary to wait for a decree: the song had already spread throughout the ghetto. (Kaczerginski, 1952)

Four months after the memorable May Day event, Glik, attempting to mobilize out of the ghetto, was captured by the Gestapo and deported to a labor camp in Estonia. The following summer, he escaped to the forests. According to Kaczerginski, "He was never heard from again. Presumably a band of German soldiers made an end of his young life."

Zog nit keynmal derives its melody from a march, *To ne tuchi, groznye oblaku* (First

Zog nit keynmal az du greyt dem letstn veg,  
Khotst himlen blayene fashichn bloye teg!  
Kumen vet nokh undzer oysgebnikte shn,—  
Es vet a poyk ton undzer troe-mir zaynen dol!

Never say that you have reached the final road,  
Though lead-grey clouds conceal blue skies above,  
The hour that we've longed for now draws near,  
Our steps proclaim like drumbeats: We Are Here!

Fun grimen palmenland haz vaysn land fun shney,  
Mir komen on mit undzer peyn, mit undzer veg,  
Un va gefeln s'iz a shprints fun undzer blut,  
Shproten vet dort undzer gvare, undzer mut.

From green, palmey lands and countries white with snow,  
We come with all our suffering and woe;  
And wherever any of our blood is shed,  
Our courage and our valor rise again!

Es vet di morgman begilten undt dem haynt,  
Un der nekhtn vet farshvindel minn faynd,  
Nor oyb farzamen vet di zun in dem kayor-  
Vi a parol zol gevyn dos lid fun dir tzu dort!

Tomorrow's sun will turn this day to gold,  
And this dark night will vanish with the foe,  
But should tomorrow's sun await the dawn too long,  
Let this song ring out for ages yet to come!

Dos lid gestrich iz mit blut un mit blay,  
S'iz nit keyn lidd fun a foygl oyf der fray,  
Dus hot a folk tsivishn faindike ven,  
Dus lid gezungen mit nagates in di hent!

Not with lead was this song written, but with blood;  
It wasn't wailed in the forest by a bird!  
But a people, trapped between collaring walls,  
With weapons held in hand—they sang this song!

To, zog nit keynmal az du greyt dem letstn veg,  
Khotst himlen blayene fashichn bloye teg!  
Kumen vet nokh undzer oysgebnikte shn-  
Es vet a poyk ton undzer troe-mir zaynen dol!

So, never say that you have reached the final road,  
Though lead-grey clouds conceal blue skies above,  
The hour that we've longed for now draws near,  
Our steps proclaim like drumbeats: We Are Here!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

“Spiritual Resistance” Worksheet: Partisan Songs

Directions: After listening to the two musical selections, answer the following questions. You may use the handouts with the lyrics to help.

Yid, du Partizaner (The Jewish Partisan)

1. Shmerke Kaczerginski wrote the words to this song while he was in the Voroshilov Brigade. Why was their main camp nicknamed “America”?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What does the author call his “friend”? What does this suggest about his attitude?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What does he think makes the partisans effective fighters?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What kind of instrument was used in this song? Why do you think this instrument might be popular with partisans living in the forest?

\_\_\_\_\_

Zog nit keynmol az du geyst dem letstn veg (Never Say That You Have Reached the Final Road)

5. What event inspired Hirsch Glik to write the words to this song?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Where was Hirsch living when he wrote this song? (Hint – He mentions being close enough to the Nazis that they could look at each other.)

\_\_\_\_\_

7. What do you think is meant by the line “Though lead-gray clouds conceal blue skies above”?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. What do you think is meant by the line “The hour that we’ve longed for now draws near”?

\_\_\_\_\_

9. What do you think is meant by the lines “But should tomorrow’s sun await the dawn too long, let this song ring out for ages yet to come”?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Who do you think is supposed to hear the message “We are here!”?

\_\_\_\_\_

11. What happened to Hirsch Glik?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## Jewish Resistance: Oral Report Summary Sheet

Directions: Fill out the following chart with brief descriptions about each group report.

<b>Individuals or Group involved</b>	<b>Resistance Activities</b>	<b>Difficulties, Dangers, Dilemmas</b>

Which types of resistance do you think were most effective? Explain your answer.

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