

# **SPIRITUAL, EDUCATIONAL, AND PHYSICAL RESISTANCE IN THE WARSAW GHETTO**

## **A Six Day Lesson Plan for Middle School**

by

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### ***LESSON ONE***

#### **PURPOSE**

It is assumed that the students have had an introduction to the ghetto system as established by the Nazis. It is important for students today to learn that the ghetto inhabitants were not passive captives, but rather showed their resistance to their situation in many different forms. This first lesson will focus in on the establishment of the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland, and the first examples of resistance on the part of the ghetto inhabitants.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will understand the geographic dimensions of the Warsaw Ghetto by being given a map of the City of Warsaw with the boundaries of the ghetto specially noted.
2. Students will learn of the restrictions placed on the Jews as they moved into the ghetto. We will focus on amounts of baggage, and on the housing arrangements.
3. Students will learn of the initial physical impact on the ghetto residents as far as diet and diseases.
4. Students will learn of the development of cultural and educational events in the ghetto. This is the beginning of the resistance to their captivity.

## MATERIALS

### READINGS TO BE USED:

Dr. M. Dvergetzki, *A Jewish Family Leaves Home* (Teachers' Institute on the Holocaust), Yad Vashem

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research: *Warsaw Ghetto: Discussion Guide*, Dimensions, Vol 7 No 2, 1993.

Vladka Meed, *Jewish Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto*: Dimensions, Vol 7 No. 2, 1993

*The Road to the Final Solution*: Ohio Holocaust Curriculum Guide, 1988.

### VIDEO TO BE USED:

*A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto* ( Opening Part: Layout of Ghetto )  
*War and Love* ( Movement to the Ghetto, and early youth resistance )  
*Schindler's List* ( Not the Warsaw Ghetto but does show Movement to the Ghetto )

## METHOD AND ORDER OF PRESENTATION

Students will be reminded of what we have studied about why the Nazis developed the formation of such places as the Warsaw Ghetto. Students will then be handed a map which shows the City of Warsaw as it existed in 1940, and the area designated as the Warsaw Ghetto. Students will be given a vocabulary list related to the Warsaw Ghetto. Students will be shown the opening segment of *A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto* which uses graphic movement to show the size of the ghetto and gives figures as to how many people were to be inside of the ghetto. In addition, the teacher may want to put on the board some of the statistics from two short selections: *The Road to the Final Solution* ( "The Resettlement *Aktionen* in Warsaw" and "The Appearance of the Jewish Quarter"). This will give them such figures as the size of the ghetto ( 1,016 acres), and the initial numbers of Jews in the ghetto (470,000-590,000).

Students will then be handed a reading, *A Jewish Family Leaves Home*, which will give them an idea of the swiftness by which the movement of Jews from their homes to the ghetto took place, what they were allowed to take, and

even an example of resistance...( main character in the reading smashes the keys of the family piano so that, "...It will not be played by some German for his amusement..." A short excerpt from *Schindler's List* showing the movement of a wealthy family from their well furnished apartment to the ghetto will give further information to the students. If there is time, a short excerpt from *War and Love* will further this picture for the students.

This opening lesson will conclude with the a short reading from the Warsaw Ghetto Discussion Guide on the development by the Yiddish Cultural Organization of concerts and other such events. The students will be reminded that events such as these became a form of spiritual and educational resistance to the conditions around the inhabitants of the ghetto.

## CLOSURE

Students will be reminded that there were numerous individuals who kept diaries of their lives in the Warsaw Ghetto. Chaim Kaplan was one of these. Students will be given the following quote from one of his entries and asked to write a one page reaction with examples to it:

***"Every dance is a protest against our oppressors"*<sup>1</sup>**

## LESSON TWO

### PURPOSE

This second lesson will focus on life within the Warsaw Ghetto. The students need to come to understand that, despite all of the hardships imposed by the Nazis, which included random roundups and shootings, starvation, and every increasing demands made upon the inhabitants, that the people continued to live their lives, both spiritually and educationally. This in itself, became a form of resistance.

### OBJECTIVES

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<sup>1</sup>Teacher may need to do some explanation in order for the students to deal with this quote.

1. Students will be able to understand and cite examples of life within the Warsaw Ghetto in the period of 1941-1942.
2. Students will be able to cite examples of educational and spiritual resistance on the part of the ghetto inhabitants.
3. Students will come to see the role taken by the young people in the ghetto. This will be accomplished by having the students read and see examples of how the young people maintained educational facilities; as well as the role of the young in providing food for their parents and other ghetto inhabitants by their “getting thru the wall” to the Aryan side.
4. Students will study primary source writings including those written by the children themselves.

## MATERIALS

### READINGS TO BE USED:

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research: *Warsaw Ghetto: Discussion Guide*, Dimensions, Vol 7 No. 2, 1993.

Vladka Meed, *Jewish Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto*: Dimensions, Vol 7 No. 2, 1993.

*The Road to the Final Solution: “Quotations from the Victims”*: Ohio Holocaust Curriculum Guide, 1988.

Irena Sendler, *The Valor of the Young*: Dimensions, Vol 7 No. 2, 1993.

Itzhak Tatelbaum, *Through Our Eyes: Children Witness the Holocaust*. Yad Vashem Special Edition. Chicago: I.B.T. Publishing, Inc., 1993.

### VIDEO TO BE USED:

*A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto*

*A Return to the Warsaw Ghetto*

### SPECIAL MUSIC TO BE USED:

*Songs of the Ghetto*. This will include “*The Song of the Jewish Partisans*” and “*Yisroelik*”

## METHOD AND ORDER OF PRESENTATION

The lesson will begin with the collection of homework assignment relating to the quote dealing with resistance. A brief review of what was covered in the opening lesson will be carried out. A short lecture will follow which over-views the conditions within the Warsaw Ghetto, the demands placed upon the Judenrat, and the further development of agencies and schools which existed despite the strict rules of the Nazis forbidding their existence!<sup>2</sup> It is important for the students to understand that the impression that the Jews under these conditions merely existed, and did not resist, is totally false. Irene Sendler's article, *The Valor of the Young*, points out many home committees that were formed to help with the young children, to provide what medical assistance could be found, and, in the latter part of 1942 to the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, to coordinate the process of physical resistance.

The students will again view another portion of the video, *A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto*. In this video, as in the readings, it will be pointed out that, despite the conditions, illegal schools were set up which taught all sorts of subjects. The readings and the video will also highlight the role of "Zkor," a Jewish cultural organization that organized concerts and lectures which were well attended.<sup>3</sup> There were also many "underground" publications by the various political groups within the Jewish population. One of these "publications" was that which was worked on by Ringelblum's *Oneg Shabbat* group. Students will also read from Tatelbaum's *Through Our Eyes: Children Witness the Holocaust*, which will illustrate the feelings of the children during this time.

Another focus of this lesson will be to have the students see in pictures as well as video, the change in roles of the children and the parents. The children who became, in many cases, through their smuggling, major food

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<sup>2</sup>There are a number of difficult terms here. Make sure that you have given the students a vocabulary list, and careful definitions for these terms; especially Judenrat.

<sup>3</sup>This where you need to share with students excerpts from the readings by Meed and Sendler that I have indicated.

contributors to their families as well as the general ghetto population.

## CLOSURE

In addition to a general reaction paper to *A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto*, students will be asked to respond to a poem by one of the children; Henryka Lazawert, entitled, "*The Little Smuggler*". Students will need, in both cases, to relate their reactions to the various types of resistance on the part of the ghetto inhabitants.

## ***LESSON THREE***

### **PURPOSE**

The students are now ready to focus in on the roundups and deportations in the Warsaw Ghetto. It is important for the students to understand that, contrary to some reports, the inhabitants did not go like "sheep to the slaughter," but did, with the leadership of the young, including Mordecai Anilewicz, fight back their oppressors. These initial revolts would culminate in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising which started on April 18-19, 1943.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will be able to identify the actions of the Nazi leaders as far as the deportations of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto.
2. Students will be able to identify and discuss the position and actions of the Judenrat in receiving and carrying out the demands of the Nazis as far as deportations.
3. Students will be able to view, read, and discuss the actions of the young leaders in organizing demonstrations against deportations.
4. Students will be able, thru the use of maps, video, and readings, to understand how the inhabitants prepared the various hiding places against the roundups and deportations.
5. Students will begin to view and read about the initial planning for the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

## MATERIALS

### READINGS TO BE USED:

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research: *Warsaw Ghetto: Discussion Guide*, Dimensions, Vol 7 No. 2, 1993.

Vladka Meed, *Jewish Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto*: Dimensions, Vol 7 No. 2, 1993.

Emmanuel Ringelblum: *Notes From the Warsaw Ghetto*, Reflections *The Road to the Final Solution: "Quotations from the Victims"*: Ohio Holocaust Curriculum Guide, 1988.

Yuri Suhl, *The Evidence* ( Selection from )

Irena Sendler, *The Valor of the Young*: Dimensions, Vol 7 No. 2, 1993.

Itzhak Tatelbaum, *Through Our Eyes: Children Witness the Holocaust*. Yad Vashem Special Edition. Chicago: I.B.T. Publishing, Inc., 1993.

### VIDEO TO BE USED:

*A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto*

*War and Love*

*The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*

*The Wall*

## METHOD AND ORDER OF PRESENTATION

The lesson will begin with the collection of homework, and the distribution of special vocabulary related to the resistance and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. A short lecture will present an over-view of the initial roundups and deportations. This will then be re-enforced by readings from the sources listed above. A special focus will be presented on the role of the Judenrat, and in particular the writings and actions of the head of the Judenrat, Adam Czerniakow, as he contemplates the demands placed on him; demands which will eventually result in his suicide. Students will also view selections from *War and Love* and *The Wall* showing the preparations for the uprising, and the role, or lack of, played the various Polish underground groups. Students will also study the efforts of Vladka Meed and others to get children out of the ghetto to the Aryan side; as well as the communication links that they provided for the gathering of supplies.

The most important part of this lesson will be for students to study the

actions of the youth; the Jewish Fighting Organization of Warsaw, the ZOB, who, on January 18, 1943 successfully cajoled the population with the call, “RESIST! Don’t let yourself be taken away ,” into fighting back rather than simply going to the umschlagplatz. This will be additionally re-enforced by video excerpts from *War and Love* and *The Wall*. Finally a special map will be used with the students that will show the major centers for the uprising; as well as the ways in which hiding places and bunkers were built throughout the ghetto.

## **CLOSURE**

Students will be asked, using as a resource such as one of the videos that they have watched, to do a piece of creative writing on the following statement:

*“... It has been said that the Jews’ belief in the importance of life was their greatest strength and their greatest weakness.” Do you agree ?”*

## **LESSON FOUR**

### **WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING**

#### **PURPOSE**

The students will now study the first and perhaps the best known incidents of physical resistance on the part of the Jews during the period of the Holocaust. It is important for the students to realize that this was actually the first major group to revolt against Nazi oppression. In this lesson, students will study the individual acts of the leaders and the reaction of the world to this uprising.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will study the organizational structure of the ghetto fighter organizations.
2. Students will develop a timeline showing the acts that precipitated the

uprising; as well as the progress that the uprising itself took.

3. Students will study and view the outcome of the uprising and its impact on the Poles; as well as other occupied peoples.

## **MATERIALS**

### **READINGS TO BE USED:**

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research: *Warsaw Ghetto: Discussion Guide*, Dimensions, Vol 7 No. 2, 1993.

Vladka Meed, *Jewish Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto*: Dimensions, Vol 7 No. 2, 1993.

Emmanuel Ringelblum: *Notes From the Warsaw Ghetto*, Reflections *The Road to the Final Solution: "Quotations from the Victims"*: Ohio Holocaust Curriculum Guide, 1988.

Yuri Suhl, *The Evidence* ( Selection from )

Itzhak Tatelbaum, *Through Our Eyes: Children Witness the Holocaust*. Yad Vashem Special Edition. Chicago: I.B.T. Publishing, Inc., 1993.

### **VIDEO TO BE USED:**

*War and Love*

*The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*

*The Wall*

### **MUSIC TO BE USED:**

"*The Song of the Jewish Partisans*" Hirsh Glick

## **METHOD AND ORDER OF PRESENTATION**

The lesson will begin with collection of the writings that were assigned, and a discussion of student viewpoints. Specific vocabulary relating to the uprising will be distributed to the students. Timeline charts for the students to work on will also be handed out. I will review with the students the deportations of 1942, and the dramatic January 18, 1943 revolt against these deportations. The students will be handed readings and quotes from the leaders

of the ZOB. These will deal with the organization of the fighting units, the role of individuals such as Vladka Meed in obtaining arms and other materials, and the negotiations with the Polish Underground. Students will also view selections from *War and Love*, *The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, and *The Wall*. All three of these video excerpts will show the organization of the Jewish fighting units, and the choices that all made despite the knowledge that they were fighting hopeless odds.

Class discussions will be held on why these people chose this course of action. Stress will be placed on Anilewicz's "*The Last Wish of My Life Has Been Fulfilled*". The lesson will conclude with the presentation of statistics on the impact of the uprising on the German soldiers; as well as the City of Warsaw... and the world. With some assistance from you, the discussion question in the guide dealing with Buber's statement about "fruitless victories" could be used with students.

## **CLOSURE**

The students will be assigned a creative writing assignment in reaction to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. This could be done in the form of poetry or short story. It will be due in at the conclusion of the unit.

## ***LESSON FIVE***

### **PURPOSE**

It is now important for students to look at the whole Warsaw Ghetto experience and the choices that the inhabitants made.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will review the readings they have used on the Warsaw Ghetto.
2. Students will use these readings in order to formulate a reaction to the following statement:

*Ghetto life forced on the residents many tragic dilemmas in which*

*no one choice was superior to any other choice. What examples of “choiceless choices” can you identify from the readings and video excerpts ?*

3. Students will form groups to discuss their reaction to the statement above.

4. Students as an entire group will use their knowledge concerning the Warsaw Ghetto to downplay the often held belief that the inhabitants were passive to their fate.

## **MATERIALS**

All sources handed out to students, with special emphasis placed on the Yivo handout, Vladka Meed’s article, and *Through Our Eyes: Children Witness the Holocaust*.

## **METHOD AND ORDER OF PRESENTATION**

Students will be introduced to this lesson by a short lecture which will review the history of the Warsaw Ghetto and the Uprising. Students will then be asked to form groups with a spokesperson in each group. Students will then view the statement in #2 under Objectives, which will be on an overhead. Students will be given directions as to how their groups should work. Groups will meet for roughly 10-15 minutes, and then have a reporting to the entire class.

## **CLOSURE**

A summary of the comments of the groups will be stressed. An introduction will be made concerning comparing the Warsaw Ghetto with the Lodz Ghetto; this will be the basis for the final lesson in this unit.

## **LESSON SIX**

### **PURPOSE**

The Warsaw Ghetto and the Lodz Ghetto were the two major ghettos that were established in Poland. The students will probably question why the

Lodz Ghetto did not have a similar uprising to the Warsaw Ghetto. This lesson will focus in on the similarities and differences between the two.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will, through selected readings and short video excerpts, learn about the Lodz Ghetto and the “Eldest of the Jews in the Litzmanstadt Ghetto,” Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, who was the head of the Judenrat.

2. The students will be able to recognize and understand the uniqueness of the Lodz Ghetto as far as the dictatorial powers of Rumkowski; as well as the fact that, unlike the Warsaw Ghetto, the Lodz Ghetto was virtually hermetically sealed from the non-Jewish population.

3. Students will, given the handouts and video excerpt, be able to make comparisons between the two.

## **MATERIALS**

### **READINGS TO BE USED:**

Maps of the partition of Poland between Germany and the U.S.S.R.; as well as maps of the Lodz Ghetto. Historical Atlas of the Holocaust: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Prologue to the Final Solution: “*Mordekhai Chaim Rumkowski in Lodz*”

*The Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto: 1941-1944*

Yaacob Kurtz, “*The Transfer of Lodz Jewry to the Ghetto*”

### **VIDEO TO BE USED**

*Lodz Ghetto* ( This is based on the book by the same name )

## **METHOD AND ORDER OF PRESENTATION**

The class will begin by the collecting of the creative writing assignment. Students will be introduced to the formation and organization of the Lodz Ghetto, called Litzmanstadt Ghetto by the Nazis, by means of readings and maps. This will be used by me to do a brief over-all history of the formation of

the ghetto, and the role of Rumkowski. The students will be directed to the readings that have been handed out which will have sections highlighted which will demonstrate major differences between Warsaw and Lodz. In addition students will view the video on Lodz.

Students will then be asked to discuss what they see as differences between the two ghettos. It is hoped that they will see some or all of the following reasons:

1. Dictatorial rule by Rumkowski
2. A lack of youth leaders such as in Warsaw
3. The fact that Lodz was hermetically sealed; thus preventing inter-action between Jews and non-Jews; especially and underground groups that could have helped with any uprising.

## **CLOSURE**

Students will have seen in looking primarily at the Warsaw Ghetto, excellent examples of spiritual and educational resistance on the part of the Jews. An additional point of comparison between Warsaw and Lodz will be made. This will be that, in the Warsaw Ghetto, the spiritual and educational opportunities and resistance came from organized groups. In the Lodz Ghetto, especially educational opportunities were under the direction and blessing of Rumkowski. Above all it is important for the students to understand that, even in the darkest moments, the Jews simply did not await their fate, but attempted to keep the minds and souls in tact. This was resistance at its finest!