Lesson 6

Response to the Holocaust
Resistance and Rescue
Introduction

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KEY VOCABULARY
bystander
Emmanuel Ringelbaum
Evian Conference
partisans
rescue
resistance
SS
St. Louis
White Rose

OBJECTIVES
• Students will recognize that a bystander makes an active choice.
• Students will understand that when tyranny prevails, individuals can make a difference by becoming rescuers.
• Students will carry the message of “Never Again” so that Genocide cannot happen again.
• Students will learn to become upstanders.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS
• How did the nations of the world respond to Hitler’s policies?
• How did individuals respond to Hitler’s policies?
• How did individuals respond to the Holocaust?

LESSON OVERVIEW
In this lesson students will learn that many individuals and nations were bystanders who did not come to the aid of the victims of the Holocaust. On the other hand, they will learn that resistance took many forms.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN AND ACTIVITIES
Activity 1
• Hand out the Quadrant Chart. Give students time to think about the questions. Discuss their responses and ask if the world agreed with their assessment.

Activity 2
• Divide the class into groups and distribute Documents 2 to 7, one to each group. Ask each group to examine its document and answer the questions at the end. When all groups are finished, ask a spokesperson from each group to describe the subject of the document and share the responses to the questions.
• All groups should consider and answer this question: Why do you think that this was the response?

Activity 3
• Distribute Document 8. Have students answer the questions and then discuss their answers.

Activity 4
• Using Documents 9 to 17, follow the same procedure as in Activity 2. As final questions, ask the students:
  ■ Why are these all examples of resistance?
  ■ Why did some individuals choose to follow a different path from their nation?
RESOURCES

1 Quadrant Chart
2A Reading: The Evian Conference
2B Cartoon: “Will the Evian Conference Guide Him to Freedom?”
3A Map: The Jewish Population in Europe
3B Graph: National Response to Jewish Refugees
4 Reading: The Voyage of the St. Louis
5 Photo: Danish Rescue Boat
6 Reading: Pope Pius XII
7A Photo: Birkenau
7B Reading: Why Wasn’t Auschwitz Bombed?
8 Questions on Resistance
9A Reading: Partisan Groups During the Holocaust
9B Reading: The Bielski Partisans
10A Map: Jewish Partisans and Resistance Fighters
10B Map: Jewish Revolts 1942–1945
11 Reading: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising
12 Reading: Father Maxmillian Kolbe
13A Photo: Warsaw Ghetto Milk Can
13B Reading: Letter from Emmanuel Ringelblum
14 Reading: Hiding to Survive
15 Reading: The White Rose
16 Reading: The Kindertransport
17 Poem: “Resistance”

Concluding Questions
- Do you think the words “hero” and “rescuer” are synonymous?
- Whom do you consider to be heroes today?
- How do today’s heroes compare to those who became heroes during the Holocaust?

Contemporary Connection
Why don’t countries respond more positively to world problems today?

Homework
Using the Document-Based Questions as an overall assessment, have students study the documents and answer the questions about the German occupation of Poland and the treatment of the Jewish citizens of Poland.
“The question is not why all Jews did not fight, but how many of them did. Tormented, beaten, starved, where did they find the strength—spiritual and physical—to resist?”

Elie Wiesel
Quadrant Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VICTIM</th>
<th>PERPETRATOR</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BYSTANDER</th>
<th>RESCUER</th>
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</table>

**QUESTIONS**

1. How would you define each of these roles?
2. Which of these roles is not actively chosen?
3. Complete each of the quadrants from your own experience.
4. Should these same roles apply to nations?
Between 1933 and 1941, the Nazis aimed to make Germany Judenrein (cleansed of Jews) by making life so difficult for them that they would be forced to leave the country. By 1938, about 150,000 German Jews, one in four, had already fled the country. After Germany annexed Austria in March 1938, however, an additional 185,000 Jews were brought under Nazi rule. Many Jews were unable to find countries willing to take them in.

Many German and Austrian Jews tried to go to the United States but could not obtain the papers (visas) needed to enter. Even though news of the violent pogroms of November 1938 was widely reported, Americans remained reluctant to welcome Jewish refugees. In the midst of the Great Depression, many Americans believed that refugees would compete with them for jobs and overburden social programs set up to assist the needy.

Congress had set immigration quotas in 1924 that limited the number of immigrants and discriminated against groups considered racially and ethnically undesirable. These quotas remained in place even after President Roosevelt, responding to mounting political pressure, called for an international conference to address the refugee problem.

In the summer of 1938, delegates from thirty-two countries met at the French resort of Evian. Roosevelt chose not to send a high-level official, such as the Secretary of State, to Evian; instead, Myron C. Taylor, a businessman and close friend of Roosevelt’s, represented the U.S. at the conference. During the nine-day meeting, delegate after delegate rose to express sympathy for the refugees. But most countries, including the United States and Britain, offered excuses for not letting in more refugees.

Responding to Evian, the German government was able to state with great pleasure how astounding it was that foreign countries criticized Germany for their treatment of the Jews, but none of them wanted to open the doors to them when “the opportunity offer(ed).”

Even efforts by some Americans to rescue children failed: the Wagner-Rogers bill, an effort to admit 20,000 endangered Jewish refugee children, was not supported by the Senate in 1939 and 1940. Widespread racial prejudices among Americans—including anti-Semitic attitudes held by the U.S. State Department officials—played a part in the failure to admit more refugees.


**QUESTIONS**

1. What was the purpose of the Evian Conference?
2. What was the outcome of the conference?
3. How did the reaction of world nations encourage the implementation of Nazi policy?
Cartoon: “Will the Evian Conference Guide Him to Freedom?”


QUESTIONS
1. How does the cartoonist depict the results of the Evian Conference?
2. Do you think that the cartoonist supports the outcome of the Evian Conference? Give evidence.
Map: The Jewish Population in Europe

QUESTIONS

1. Examine the map. Make note of the different number of Jews living in the various countries in Europe.
2. Which countries were inhabited by large numbers of Jews and which were home to far fewer Jews?
DOCUMENT 3B

Graph: National Response to Jewish Refugees


**QUESTION**

1. Which country admitted the largest number of refugees and which one admitted the fewest? Why?
2. What was the total number of refugees accepted into foreign countries between 1933–1945?
3. What conclusions can you draw by comparing the Jewish population in Europe in 1933 with the information in the graph?
Refused Entry
One effort to get out of Germany was made by German Jews who were able to secure passage to Cuba on the S.S. *St. Louis*. On May 13, 1939, a total of 937 Jews departed Hamburg on this luxury liner. All had visas, permits that assured them the right to land. But when they arrived, Cuba refused them entry. When they then attempted to reach the shores of the United States, the ship was forced out of U.S. territorial waters by the Coast Guard, on orders of the U.S. government. Jane Keibel was a child on that voyage.

Jane Keibel Remembers the S.S. *St. Louis* Voyage
We had our visas to America for quite a while, because my father had two brothers who lived here. But my immigration number was very high. And after Kristallnacht, my father decided he could not wait in Europe for that number to come up. So he had to explore different ways of getting out of Germany.

One of them was Shanghai, China, and he was not looking forward to that, so he opted for Cuba. And he bought visas for my family, my sister, myself, and my parents. And if I remember correctly, they were $1,500 apiece.

And after he got the visas, the entry visas to Cuba, he purchased places on the ship. And the ship that had room was the *St. Louis*. And that left on May 13, 1939. My father spent all his money on this, we went first class. And my sister and I shared our cabin with a distant relative, a lady who was supposed to chaperone us.

We boarded the ship on May 13, 1939. It was a German ship and it sailed out of Hamburg in the afternoon. It took about 10 days to reach Havana. And when we got to Havana, we weren't supposed to land at the port, but we had to stay out in international waters. And the excuse was that the Cuban authorities had to come and inspect passports and visas.

And they came on board, and they inspected, and they left, and we still couldn't land. We were told after a couple of days that the reason we couldn't land was the Cuban government wanted more money. And the passengers on the ship, of course, had no money—all we were allowed to take out of Germany was 10 dollars.

So Jewish organizations got involved and tried to raise money, mostly out of America. But whatever money they raised was not enough for Cuba.

And from the ship we appealed to Mr. Roosevelt, who was the American President then, and the children sent a telegram to Mrs. Roosevelt, but nothing became available. They did not want to let us in.

The orders were from the shipping company.
to come back to Europe, to Germany. So we went up the coast, we saw Miami, and we went up as far as New York, and nothing happened, so we sailed to Europe...Just before we reached the English Channel, four countries said they would take a quarter of the passengers. And we

On June 6, 1939, the *St. Louis* returned to Europe. Only last-minute decisions by Great Britain, Holland, France, and Belgium prevented the refugees from returning to certain incarceration in Nazi concentration camps. Still, many of those who remained on the continent ended up in the camps.


**QUESTIONS**

1. Why did Jane Keibel’s family decide to leave Germany?
2. What obstacles did they face once they made the decision?
3. Why might some Jews have chosen to stay in Germany?
4. The *St. Louis* was not the only ship carrying refugees to be turned away from the United States in the late 1930s. What do such incidents suggest about America’s “universe of obligation”?
Among the Nazi-occupied countries, only Denmark rescued its Jews. Most Danes regarded Jews as full members of their community and the Danish government resisted Nazi pressure to persecute them. From 1940 to the spring of 1943, the Nazis refrained from harming Denmark’s Jews.

On September 28, 1943, George Ferdinand Duckwitz, a German diplomat, informed one of his contacts about the S.S. plans to deport the Danish Jews. Three days later, German police began making arrests. Heeding these warnings, the Danes launched a nationwide effort to smuggle Jews by boat to Sweden, a neutral country.

Jews were hidden in homes, hospitals, and churches of coastal towns. Danish police refused to cooperate in arrests. Jewish and non-Jewish Danes raised the equivalent of $600,000 to pay for passage to Sweden. In October, 7220 Danish Jews were brought to safety. The Danes thus proved that widespread support of Jews and resistance to Nazi police policies could prevent deportation.

Nevertheless, almost 500 Danish Jews were deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto, among them elderly and disabled Jews and some too poor to afford the boat trip to Sweden. Yet even of these Jews, all but 51 survived the Holocaust.

The clandestine rescue of Danish Jews was undertaken at great personal risk. This boat and several others like it were used by one of the earliest rescue operations, organized by a group of
Danish Rescue Boat

Danes code-named the “Helsingør Sewing Club.” The escape route they provided, named the “Kiaer Line” after Erling Kiaer, founder of the “Helsingør Sewing Club,” enabled several hundred Jews to escape across a narrow strait to the Swedish coast. On each trip, the boat carried 12–14 Jewish refugees. Kiaer himself was betrayed and arrested in May 1944.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe how the Danes helped the Jews.
2. How and why was the reaction of the Danes different from that of people of other countries?
3. How did geography contribute to the success of the Danish rescue?
The head of the Catholic Church at the time of the Nazi rise to power was Pope Pius XI. Although he stated that the myths of “race” and “blood” were contrary to Christian teaching (in a Papal Encyclical, March 1937), he neither mentioned nor criticized anti-Semitism. His successor, Pius XII (Cardinal Pacelli) was a Germanophile who maintained his strict neutrality throughout the course of World War II. Although, as early as 1942, the Vatican received detailed information on the murder of Jews in concentration camps, the Pope confined his public statements to broad expressions of sympathy for the victims of injustice and to calls for a more humane conduct of the war.

Despite the lack of response by Pope Pius XII, several papal nuncios played an important role in rescue efforts, particularly the nuncios in Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Turkey. It is not clear to what, if any, extent they operated upon instructions from the Vatican. In Germany, the Catholic Church did not oppose the Nazis’ anti-Semitic campaign. Church records were supplied to state authorities which assisted in the detection of people of Jewish origin, and efforts to aid the persecuted were confined to Catholic non-Aryans. While Catholic clergymen protested the Nazi euthanasia program, few, with the exception of Bernhard Lichtenberg, spoke out against the murder of the Jews.

In Western Europe, Catholic clergy spoke out publicly against the persecution of the Jews and actively helped in the rescue of Jews. In Eastern Europe, however, the Catholic clergy was generally more reluctant to help. Dr. Jozef Tiso, the head of state of Slovakia and a Catholic priest, actively cooperated with the Germans as did many other Catholic priests.

The response of Protestants and Eastern Orthodox churches complied with the anti-Jewish legislation and even excluded Christians of Jewish origin from membership. Pastor Martin Niemöller’s Confessing Church defended the rights of Christians of Jewish origin within the church, but did not publicly protest their persecution, nor did it condemn the measures taken against the Jews, with the exception of a memorandum sent to Hitler in May 1936.

In occupied Europe, the position of the Protestant churches varied. In several countries (Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and Norway) local churches and/or leading clergymen issued public protests when the Nazis began deporting Jews. In other countries (Bulgaria, Greece, and Yugoslavia), some Orthodox church leaders intervened on behalf of the Jews and took steps which, in certain cases, led to the rescue of many Jews.

Simon Wiesenthal Center, Museum of Tolerance, Multimedia Learning Center Online.

QUESTIONS
1. What was the attitude of the churches vis-à-vis the persecution of the Jews?
2. Did the Pope ever speak out against the Nazis?
Photo: Birkenau

US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Photo Archive.
Why Wasn’t Auschwitz Bombed?

During the spring and summer of 1944, hundreds of Hungarian Jews were deported to Auschwitz/Birkenau. As many as ten thousand people a day were killed in its gas chambers. Jewish leaders in Budapest and Slovakia, American Jewish organizations, and the U.S. government’s War Refugee Board all urged the Allies to intervene. Their requests, though made independently, called for the same action. Auschwitz must be bombed. At the very least, the railway lines leading to the death camp must be knocked out.

These repeated requests were denied. The Americans gave several reasons: Auschwitz was not within the range of Allied bombers, military resources could not be diverted from the war effort, bombing Auschwitz might provoke even more vindictive German action.

In fact, as early as 1944, the United States Air Force had the capability to strike Auschwitz at will. The rail lines from Hungary were also well within range. On July 7, 1944, American bombers flew over the railway lines to Auschwitz. On August 20, 127 Flying Fortresses, with an escort of 100 Mustang fighter craft, dropped 1,336 five-hundred pound bombs on a factory less than five miles east of Auschwitz. The death camp remained untouched.

In August, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy wrote to Leon Kubowitzki of the World Jewish Congress, noting that the War Refugee Board has asked if it was possible to bomb Auschwitz:

After a study, it became apparent that such an operation could be executed only by the diversion of considerable air support...now engaged in decisive operations elsewhere and would...be of such doubtful efficacy that it would not warrant the use of our resources. There has been considerable opinion to the effect that such an effort, even if practicable, might provoke even more vindictive action by the Germans.

McCloy was less than candid: there had been no study on bombing Auschwitz. Instead, the War Department had decided in January that army units would not be “employed for the purpose of rescuing victims of enemy oppression” unless a rescue opportunity arose in the course of the routine military operations. In February, an internal U.S. War Department memo stated: “We must constantly bear in mind that the most effective relief which can be given the victims of enemy persecution is to insure the speedy defeat of the Axis.”

The defeat of the Axis came fifteen months later, too late for those murdered in 1944 and 1945. Bombing Auschwitz could have significantly slowed the killing process and saved innumerable lives. By 1944, American government officials were fully informed about the operations of the killing center. As for McCloy’s stated fear of provoking Nazi retaliation, how much more vindictive could the Nazis have become?
Elie Wiesel, an Auschwitz survivor, recalls the hope of an Allied attack:

Then we began to hear the airplanes. Almost at once the barracks began to shake. “They’re bombing Buna,” someone shouted. [Buna was the German synthetic rubber factory at Auschwitz III that relied on slave labor.] I thought of my father. But I was glad all the same. To see the whole works go up in fire—what revenge!…We were not afraid. And yet, if a bomb had fallen on the blocks it alone would have claimed hundreds of victims on the spot. But we were no longer afraid of death; at any rate not of that death. Every bomb that exploded filled us with joy and gave us new confidence in life.


QUESTIONS

1. What reasons did the Americans give for not bombing Auschwitz?
2. Do you agree with the decision not to bomb Auschwitz? Explain.
Questions on Resistance

1. What does the word “resistance” mean?
2. What is necessary for someone to resist something?
3. Why would someone choose to resist something?
4. What forms can resistance take?
5. How do you think that resistance in a ghetto may have been different from resistance in a concentration camp? Explain.
6. How would a partisan demonstrate resistance?

Partisan Groups During the Holocaust

How do people fight? Sometimes they fight with their bare hands. Sometimes they resist by remaining human and helping others, although it may seem that the world has become one monster. Sometimes they resist by producing poetry, diaries, art work, writing, and doing this when there is no food to eat and one does not expect to live until the next day. Sometimes they resist by praying to God, even when the situation has become so terrible that one is not sure if there is a God, yet they observe His commandments and continue their existence for yet another day. But sometimes one fights back with guns. When they live in a ghetto surrounded by barbed wire and well-fed soldiers with machine guns, how do they obtain these guns?

The lie has spread that the Jews went “like sheep to the slaughter.” No such thing! As soon as the people understood what “resettlement in the East” meant, resistance groups sprang up all over. “Resettlement”, of course, was another way of saying they were to be murdered. The most famous of these resistance epics was, of course, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which began April 19, 1943, the night of the first Passover Seder. This rebellion lasted longer than the entire Polish army’s resistance against the Germans. But the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was not the only one. There were many other uprisings and retaliations.

In ghettos, in forests and, even in the concentration camps, acts of sabotage and resistance took place. In Auschwitz, the most dreaded of all the concentration camps, one of the crematoria was blown up, with the help of a young woman, Rosa Robota. Mala Zimerbaum, another young woman in Auschwitz, helped many of the inmates escape death. She herself escaped from Auschwitz and was gone two weeks before she was re-captured. The problem with escape was that there was no place for a Jew to hide, no one to have compassion, no one to care. Mala was to be an example to the inmates of Auschwitz, but before the Nazis could kill her, she cut her wrists. Finally, they threw her into the crematorium without gassing her first.

At Sobibor, another concentration camp, there was an uprising, and after this, the camp was dismantled. At Treblinka, another death camp, the death factory was partially destroyed and not rebuilt. Uprisings took place at seventeen different camps.

Like sheep to slaughter? Elie Wiesel says, “The question is not why all the Jews did not fight, but how many of them did. Tormented, beaten, starved, where did they find the strength—spiritual and physical—to resist?” And other nationalities, did they resist? Even two million captured Russian soldiers, used to fighting, to holding a gun, to battle—there was not one case of resistance among them. Thousands of Poles re-settled to work in Germany, and there was not one case of resistance. Italians were murdered in the Ardeatine caves near Rome, but offered no resistance. In the Katyn forest, not far from the city of Smolensk in White Russia, some 5,000 Polish soldiers were murdered, shot in the head, their hands tied; not one fought back.

Jewish children smuggled food into the ghettos, but many were caught and shot to death at the ghetto walls. Still, they had to have food, and they continued their smuggling. Study, prayer, plays, entertainment, poetry readings, orchestras—all operated under what would seem to be
impossible conditions. In Cracow, in September 1942, Zionist youth groups formed a resistance movement. They sabotaged railroad lines, attacked German buildings, assassinated a number of German officials. In Bialystok, an armed rebellion broke out in 1943. Many of the fighters fled to the forest, but even that was a problem. Poles and Ukranians who had their own resistance groups were viciously anti-Semitic and fought their Jewish comrades in arms instead of concentrating on their mutual enemy, the Nazis.

Partisan units were formed in Minsk, in Riga, in Mir and Buezyn and in Vilna. The French Jews had an underground which called itself “The Jewish Partisan Unit of Paris.”

Some could escape to the forest and fight. But then another dilemma presented itself. If one escapes to the forest to fight and remain alive, what happens to his family? As soon as it was learned that a member of the family had escaped, the family was doomed. But, of course, they were doomed anyway. Would you want to be the cause of your family’s immediate destruction? This was a difficult decision to make.


QUESTIONS
1. Describe the special challenges partisan fighters faced.
2. Describe some of their accomplishments as they faced these challenges.
Of the estimated 20,000 to 30,000 Jews who fought in partisan groups in the forests of Eastern Europe, the group led by Tuvia Bielski was the largest and the most renowned. Though members of his family were murdered by Einsatzgruppen in Novogrudok, Tuvia escaped to the forests of western Belorussia.

Together with his brothers Zusys, Asael, and Aharon, Tuvia secured arms and created a partisan group that grew to 30 members. This band of Resistance fighters dispatched couriers to ghettos in the Novogrudok region to recruit fellow Jews to join their camp. Eventually, Bielski’s camp contained hundreds of families.

The primary aim of the Bielski partisans was to protect Jewish lives. But they were also aggressive, launching raids against the Germans and exacting revenge on Belorussian police and farmers who helped the Nazis massacre Jews.

Frustrated by the activities of the Bielski group, the Germans offered a large reward for Tuvia’s capture.

However, the group successfully escaped by retreating deep into the forest. When the area was liberated in the summer of 1944, Bielski’s band of partisans numbered 1200.

After the war, Tuvia immigrated to Palestine. He later settled in the United States with two surviving brothers.


**QUESTION**

In what ways did Jews resist during the Holocaust?
Map: Jewish Partisans and Resistance Fighters

This map shows some of the areas in which Jewish resistance fighters were particularly prominent and active in destroying German military stores and communications, and in seizing whole regions from German control.

As well as the Jewish revolts in Ghettoes and Death Camps, many Jews fought in resistance and partisan units throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. Some fought as individuals within local resistance groups, while others formed specifically Jewish units, working closely with local and national underground groups.

Areas in which specifically Jewish partisan groups attacked and harried the German occupation forces:
- Thirty-eight of the towns and villages in eastern Europe near which Jewish partisan groups were active in the behind-the-lines struggle against the German occupation forces, attacking German troops, cutting railway lines, and forming focal points for local anti-Nazi resistance. Those who were captured were all tortured and shot. Several thousand Jews also fought in Soviet and Polish partisan units.
- Jewish soldiers from Palestine and Britain who were parachuted behind enemy lines, in order to link up with resistance groups.

Despite the overwhelming military strength of the German forces, many Jews, while weakened by hunger and terrorised by Nazi brutality, nevertheless rose in revolt against their fate, not only in many of the Ghettos in which they were forcibly confined, but even in the concentration camps themselves, snatching from the very gates of death the slender possibility of survival.

Ghettos in which Jews rose up in revolt against the Germans, with dates. Many of those who revolted were able to escape to the woods, and to join Jewish, Polish or Soviet partisan groups.

Death camps in which the Jews revolted, with date of revolt. In almost every instance, those who revolted were later caught and murdered.

This map shows twenty of the Ghettos and five of the death camps in which Jews joined together and sought, often almost unarmoured, to strike back at their tormentors. These twenty-five uprisings are among the most noble and courageous episodes not only of Jewish, but of world history.

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The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, April 19, 1943—May 16, 1943. The most famous and dramatic example of armed resistance during the Holocaust was the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising by Jewish fighting forces in April and May 1943. As was true in most other locations, the uprising occurred after most of the ghetto population had already been deported and killed. In summer and fall 1942, about 300,000 Jews from Warsaw were deported to Treblinka. When reports of mass murder by gassing filtered back to the ghetto, surviving members of separate underground groups, which for months had been engaged in smuggling arms and other acts of unarmed resistance, joined together in armed resistance. Many members of the newly formed unified Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB) were angry that no one had resisted the mass deportations in 1942.

On January 18, 1943, the ZOB, led by 23-year old Mordechai Anielewicz, leader of a Zionist youth group, fired on German troops during an attempted deportation of 8,000 Jews. After a few days, the troops retreated. The small victory inspired the ghetto fighters to prepare for future resistance. When the final liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto began on April 19, 1943, the ZOB resisted the German roundups. One of the ghetto fighters, Tovia Bozhikowski, later recalled that momentous day:

Monday, April 19, was the day before Passover, the first day of spring. Sunshine penetrated even to the cheerless corners of the ghetto, but with the last trace of winter, the last hope of the Jews had also disappeared.

Those who had remained at their battle stations all night were annoyed by the beauty of the day, for it is hard to accept death in the sunshine of spring.

As members of Dror, we were stationed at Nalevskes 33. I stood on the balcony of a building on Nalevskes-Genshe with several friends, where we could watch the German troops who stole into the ghetto. Since early dawn long lines of Germans had been marching—infantry, cavalry, motorized units, regular soldiers, S.S. troops and Ukrainians.

I wondered what we could do against such might, with only pistols and rifles. But we refused to admit the approaching defeat.

By 6:00 A.M. the ghetto was surrounded. The first German detachment advanced toward Nalevskes. As it neared the crossroads of Nalevskes-Genshe-Franciskaner we opened fire with guns, grenades and small homemade bombs.

Our bombs and grenades exploded over their heads as they returned our fire. They were excellent targets in the open square, while we were concealed in the buildings. They left many dead and wounded. The alert, confident attitude of our men was impressive. The youthful Jacob shot his pistol continuously, while Abraham Dreyer and Moshe Rubin commanded from windows. Zachariash, Dror commander, moved among the men, building their courage. Liaison officers scurried between positions with messages. The battle went on for two hours.
Rivka, an observer, watched the enemy retreat. There were no more Germans on the front street. Zachariash returned beaming from his survey of the battlefield: 40 dead and wounded Germans were left behind, but we suffered no losses. But even in our satisfaction we realized we would eventually be crushed. It was though a triumph to gladden the hearts of men who were about to die.

QUESTION

1. Using the maps and text from Documents 10A and 10B, draw three conclusions about the partisans and resistance fighters and Jewish revolts.

2. Why does the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising stand as a symbol of the courage and determination of Jews to resist?
Raymond Kolbe (upon entering the religious life he assumed the name Maxmillian) was born in Zdunska Wola, Poland in January 1894. After initial religious training in Poland, Kolbe traveled to Rome to complete his theological studies. During his stay in Rome, he and six other students organized a religious group which they called the Militia of Mary Immaculate or the Knights of the Immaculata. Members of this group consecrated their lives to Mary Immaculate and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Their energies were aimed at working for the salvation of all souls, especially those who were bitter enemies of the church, such as Freemasons and Communists.

In 1919, Father Kolbe returned to his native Poland where he spread the message of the new religious order. During the course of the 1920’s and 1930’s, the Knights of the Immaculata gained strength, numbers and influence. In 1927, a parcel of land was donated to the group in order to establish a religious community which was called Niepokalanow (“the City of the Immaculata”). By 1930 the population of the religious community totaled 772 friars and students. Relying on the power of the press, the Knights of the Immaculata published a number of newspapers and magazines in Polish and Latin with a widespread circulation among Catholic clergy and laity. Between 1930–36, Father Kolbe spent much of his time traveling in the Orient, especially in Japan, where he spread the teachings of his religious order. Through his efforts, a religious community similar to Niepokalanow was established in Nagasaki, Japan. In 1936, Father Kolbe returned to Poland.

Shortly after the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, Father Kolbe was arrested by the Nazi authorities. He was released on November 9, 1939, after spending some time in a prison in Germany and in a detention camp in Poland. On February 17, 1941, Father Kolbe was again arrested by the Germans. Although he was never formally charged with a crime, we can surmise that he was included among the members of the Polish civil, religious and cultural elite who were fated to die because of their potential power to muster opposition in German to occupation forces.

After spending three months in the Pawiak Prison in Warsaw, Father Kolbe was transferred to Auschwitz. At Auschwitz, Father Kolbe was assigned to a Polish prisoners barracks in the main camp. Never very physically healthy, Father Kolbe slowly began to succumb to the harsh conditions of the concentration camp. Polish survivors who were imprisoned with him recall how Father Kolbe served as a source of spiritual strength for his imprisoned countrymen.

Sometime in the end of July 1941, the prison guards discovered that a prisoner from Block 14, Father Kolbe’s barracks, had escaped. As punishment for the escape, 10 prisoners were randomly selected for execution. Among the prisoners selected was a Polish army sergeant, Francis Gajowniczek.

When Gajowniczek learned of his fate, he screamed out, “My poor wife, my poor children, what will happen to my family!” Dr. Nicetus Francis Wlodarski, a witness to the selection, recounted, “After the selection of 10 prisoners, Father Maxmillian slipped out of line, took off his cap, and placed himself before the commandant.
Astounded, Fritsch (Lager Fuehrer Captain Fritsch) asked him: ‘What does this Polish pig want?’ Father Maxmillian pointed with his hand to the condemned Gajowniczek and replied: ‘I am a Catholic priest from Poland; I would like to take his place, because he has a wife and children.’ From astonishment, the commandant appeared unable to speak. After a moment he gave a sign with the hand. He spoke but one word: ‘Away!’ Gajowniczek received the command to return to the row he had just left. In this manner Father Maxmillian took the place of the condemned man.

Father Kolbe and the nine other condemned men were taken to Block 11 or as it was commonly called by the inmates of Auschwitz, “the Block of Death.” Their fate was to slowly die from starvation.

Bruno Borgowiec, a Polish inmate who served as one of the camp’s undertakers, recalled the last days of Father Kolbe.

…From this death cell we heard daily prayers spoken with strong voices, the rosary and religious hymns. Prisoners in other cells also joined in. In the moments when the guard was absent, I descended to the lower bunker to converse with my suffering companions and to console them… Father Maxmillian began and the others answered. Sometimes they were so absorbed in prayer that they failed to note the entrance of the guard; they became quiet at their shouts.

Often at the opening of the doors the unfortunates cried and begged for a piece of bread and a sip of water. Even this was refused them… Father Maxmillian’s death was heroic. He did not whine, neither did he murmur. He encouraged and comforted the others. As all were already very much weakened by the long time, the prayers could only be whispered. At each visit Father Maxmillian was still standing or kneeling in the middle of the cell and looking calmly at those entering.

On August 14, after almost two weeks of starvation, Father Kolbe was injected with a lethal dose of poison. Death followed immediately.

QUESTION
1. Describe Father Kolbe’s work before he was imprisoned in Auschwitz.
2. Describe the circumstances that led to his severe punishment.
3. Why is Father Kolbe’s action so striking?
The most comprehensive effort to document ghetto life was undertaken in the Warsaw Ghetto by a group of several dozen writers, teachers, rabbis, and historians led by Dr. Emmanuel Ringelblum in a secret operation code-named Oneg Shabbat (Hebrew for “Sabbath delight”). They wrote diaries, collected documents, commissioned papers, and preserved the posters and decrees that comprised the memory of the doomed community. They had no illusions. Their only hope was that memory of the Warsaw ghetto would endure.

On the eve of destruction in the spring of 1944, when all seemed lost, the archive was placed in milk cans and some metal boxes and buried deep beneath the rubble of the streets of
Warsaw. One can was found in 1946. The can shown in the photo was the second milk can buried. It was unearthed on December 1, 1950, at 68 Nowolipki Street. This can contained copies of several underground newspapers, public notes by the Jewish Council, and a narrative of deportations from the Warsaw ghetto.

Despite repeated searches for the third can and other metal containers, they remain buried in the rubble.

QUESTIONS
1. How was the milk can used?
2. How can a milk can be considered a form of resistance?
Dear Friends:
We write at a time when 95 per cent of Polish Jewry has been wiped out, wiped out under savage torture, in the gas chambers and charnel houses of Treblinka, Sobibor, Chelmno, and Oshpitzin or in the countless liquidations in the camps and ghettos. The fate of our people now painfully rotting in the concentration camps is similarly predetermined.

Perhaps a handful of Jews will survive to live a precarious existence in the Aryan sections of the cities or in the forest, hunted like beasts. It is gravely doubtful that any of us, the communal leaders, will survive the war, working under extremely hazardous conditions as we do.

When Polish Jews fell under the cruel yoke of the Nazis, the independent Jewish communal leadership began its widespread, far-reaching work, dedicated to self-help and resistance. With the active assistance of the “Joint,” a colossal network of social welfare agencies arose in Warsaw and the hinterlands under the leadership of Z.H.T.O.S. [Society for Jewish Social Welfare], Centos [Central Shelter for Children and Orphans] and T.O.Z. [Society to Guard the Health of Jewish Population]. O.R.T., too, was active. With the help of these organizations and their committees tens of thousands were able to prolong their lives. The work was kept up to the last, as long as the Jewish community showed a spark of life. Political parties and ideological groups were enabled to conduct their conspiratorial work in secrecy, and cultural activities were shielded.

The watchword of the Jewish social worker was, “Live and die with honor,” a motto we endeavored to keep in the ghettos. It found its expression in the multi-faceted cultural program that grew in spite of the terror, hunger and deprivation. It grew until the very moment of the martyrdom of Polish Jewry.

As soon as the Warsaw Ghetto was sealed off, a subterranean organization, Yikor [Yiddish Cultural Organization] was established to conduct a wide program in Jewish culture. The program included scientific lectures, celebrations to honor Peretz, Sholom Aleichem, Mendele, Borochov and others, and projects in art and literature. The prime mover of Yikor was the young economist Menachem Linder, who was killed in 1942.

Under the mantle of Centos kitchens and children’s homes there sprang up a network of underground schools representing varying shades of opinion.: Cisho, Tarbuth, Schulkult, Yavneh, Chorev, Beth Yankov and others. The secular schools were taught in Yiddish. These schools were established through the work of Shachna Zagan and Sonia Novogrudski, both of whom died at Treblinka.
A furtive central Jewish archive was formed under the deceptive title, “Society for Enjoyment of the Sabbath,” by Dr. Emmanuel Ringelblum, who, in collaboration with others from the text gathered material and documents concerning the martyrdom of the Polish Jews. Thanks to the efforts of a large staff, about twenty trunkfuls of documents, diaries, photographs, remembrances and reports were collected. The material was buried in…, which even we could not enter. Most of the material sent abroad comes from the archive. We gave the world the most accurate information about the greatest crime in history. We are continuing our work on the archive, regardless of circumstances.

In 1941 and 1942 we were in contact with… in Vilna, who, under German control, managed to coordinate and conceal a good portion of the Y.I.V.O. documents. Today there are no Jews in Vilna. This once great center of Jewish culture and modern scientific research is in shambles.

But throughout almost the entire existence of the ghetto practically every Jewish organization participated in underground work, especially youth groups. We put out newspapers, magazines and anthologies. The most active groups in this work were the Bund, which published the “Bulletin,” “Current Events,” “Voice of Youth,” “Nowa Mlodziez,” “Za Nasza i wasza Wolnosc”; Hashomer Hatzair, which published “Jutrznia Przewlosnie,” “Upsurge,” and a series of anthologies; Left Poale Zion, “Nasze Haslo,” “Proletarian Thought,” “Call of Youth,” “Vanguard”; Right Poale Zion, “Liberation”; Dror, “Dror Yedios,” “Hamadrich,” “G’vura,” “Pine”; the anti-Fascist bloc, “The Call”; the Communists, “Morning Freiheit,” and others. Some publications reached almost all other ghettos despite extreme difficulty in communications with Warsaw.

Centos, the central child care organization, led much activity among the children. Led by…and the unforgettable Rosa Simchovich (who died of typhoid contracted from street waifs), teachers, educators and artists, Centos founded a central children’s library, a theater and classes in Yiddish language and literature. Thousands of adults joined in for “Children’s Month,” a program of cultural and artistic projects which provided a little happiness far from the hideous realism of their existence. Today there are no more Jewish children in Poland. Some 99 per cent were murdered by the Nazis.

The ghetto even had a symphonic orchestra, under Shimon Pullman. Its concerts and chamber music afforded us moments of relaxation and forgetfulness. Pullman and most of the other musicians perished at Treblinka along with violinist Ludwig Holzman. The young conductor Marion Noitich died at the Travniki camp.

A great deal of young talent was found in the ghetto. The daughter of a director of the Warsaw Synagogue, Marisha Eisenstadt, was called the “Nightingale of the Ghetto.” She was killed during the liquidations. There were many choral groups, notably the children’s chorus.
directed by Feivishes, who died at the Poniatow camp. Other choirmasters were Gladstein and Sax, among those who died at Treblinka. Jewish painters and sculptors, living in frightful poverty, organized occasional exhibits. Felix Freidman was one of the best; but they all died at Treblinka.

Our activities continued in the concentration camps. In Ponyatow, Treblinka and other camps we formed secret social societies and even arranged secret celebrations during holidays. Activity continued as long as there was life, in desperate struggling against the barbarism that imprisoned us.

When the deportations began our organizations turned to battle. The youths showed the way in Zionist organizations and all branches of the labor movement. Armed resistance began in Poland. We defended the Warsaw Ghetto and fought at Bialystock. We destroyed parts of Treblinka and Sobibor. We fought at Torne, Bendin and Czestochowa. We proved to the world that we could fight back, and we died with dignity.

That’s what we wanted to tell you, dear friends. There are not many of us left. There are ten writers we would like you to attempt to contact through the Red Cross; we don’t know if they are still alive. Enclosed is a list of the dead who have helped in our work.

We doubt if we will see you again. Give our best to the builders of our culture, and to all who fight for human redemption.

Dr. E. Ringelblum


QUESTIONS

1. What were some examples of cultural activity in the ghettos of Poland?
2. How was this cultural activity a form of resistance?
3. What is the irony of this situation?
Andy Sterling was born in Hungary shortly after the outbreak of World War II. Although Hungary was a German ally in the war, Hungarian Jews were not exempt from the Nazi roundups. Sterling’s family finally sent him to safety in a Catholic orphanage in Budapest. His story is excerpted from *Hiding to Survive: Stories of Jewish Children Rescued from the Holocaust* by Maxine B. Rosenberg.

In this personal narrative, Sterling relates his experiences as a Jewish boy being hidden in a Catholic orphanage, where he could never reveal his true identity to anyone.

In 1941 Hungary, where I was born, entered the war as a German ally. A year later, when I was six and a half, my father and other Jewish men in our village were sent away to do forced labor. For the next eighteen months I didn’t know where he was.

When he came back in late 1943, he told my family stories about Jews being rounded up throughout Europe and said that we were no longer safe. He thought we should leave our small village of Nagykata where everyone knew we were Jewish and go to Budapest, the capital city, where we might blend in more.

First my parents left and moved in with my aunt. For the next few months they tried to get things in order. Suddenly, in March 1944, the Germans occupied Hungary, and Jews living in and near my village were relocated to a ghetto. My grandmother, my younger sister Judith, and I went there along with my grandmother’s brother and his wife.

Every day Jews from this ghetto were being sent to the camps. We knew that our time was running out. Luckily my uncle’s daughter knew a Christian who had connections and helped us escape. A few weeks later we learned that all the Jews in our ghetto had been shipped to Auschwitz.

Now I was with my parents again. My father had already gotten false identity papers for himself and had become an ambulance driver. I, though, had to wear a star and abide by the curfew.

That September the Germans, with the Hungarian SS as their helpers, began deporting Jews in huge numbers and shooting Jews on the street. At the same time, the Russians were bombing the city. Things got so bad, my parents forbade me to leave the apartment and said I could play only in the garden within the building.

One day I disobeyed and went across the street with a little mirror to see how the sun’s rays reflected off it. Out of nowhere, an SS man holding a leashed German shepherd appeared and grabbed me by the collar. He accused me of giving signals to American flyers and was about to take me away when the superintendent of my apartment came to my rescue. He convinced the SS man to let me go.

At this point my parents realized how much danger we were in and said that my sister and I had to be hidden. When I heard that I’d be separated from my parents, I was very upset.

My parents said I’d be going to a Catholic orphanage in Budapest with Paul, their friend’s child, who was two years older than I. Paul’s parents had found the place, and the priest in charge was willing to hide us. Judith, now five, was being sent to a convent, and my mother was going to live with a Catholic family in town. My father said he’d be moving around in his ambulance trying to get false papers for my aunt and grandmother.
Before I left, my parents warned me not to tell anyone at the orphanage I was Jewish. Because I was circumcised, they said I had to be extra careful not to be seen when I undressed or urinated.

In October 1944, my father drove Paul and me to the orphanage. We left at night in the middle of an air raid, when only emergency vehicles were allowed on the street.

As soon as we got to the door, my father said good-bye and promised to visit whenever he could. As he drove away, I felt abandoned. It was the first time I was on my own.

The priest and his assistant took Paul and me into an office and told us never to talk about being Jewish, not even to each other. If the orphanage boys asked why we had come a month after school had started, we were to say that our fathers had been killed on the front and that our mothers were too ill to take care of us.

After the priest coached us on some of the morning prayers, he showed us to the dormitory. I lay in bed terrified. Everything was strange. I wanted my parents.

The next morning the priest introduced us to the boys. There were sixty of them, and most had been in the orphanage for years and years and knew one another. I had only met Paul twice before.

That morning I went to services and carefully watched what the others did. When they stood up, I stood up. When they knelt, I knelt. But when they crossed themselves, I got uncomfortable. I had been brought up in a Jewish home and gone to Hebrew school, and I felt awkward. In the end I crossed myself like the rest of the boys, and from then on I did what I was told. I was too afraid to do anything else.

My father visited from time to time. He could only stay for a few minutes, but at least I knew he was alive. Once in a while he came when I wasn’t around, and the priest would give me the message. The priest tried to look after me and make sure I was okay, but with so many boys to take care of he didn’t always have the time. Mostly I fended for myself.

In November, one month after I arrived, the bombing increased and the air raid sirens went off night and day. In a hurry we’d all rush down into the bunker, where the priest would lead us in prayer. In between the bombings the priest and his assistant tried to conduct classes, but when the air raids became too frequent, they gave up.

After that we moved into the bunker full time, running upstairs only to use the bathroom. We’d go in shifts of four or five, with just twenty-five seconds each. For emergencies we kept some buckets downstairs.

By then it was winter, and it was very cold. We had no heat or electricity, and there was a water shortage. That meant we couldn’t bathe or change our clothes. For me it was easier not having to undress in front of the others. But soon we all were infested with lice.

At this time the Russians invaded Budapest, arriving in tanks. They destroyed one building after another until the Germans and the Hungarian SS were trapped and resorted to street fighting. It got so dangerous, my father was afraid to drive his ambulance and stopped coming to see me. Now I felt totally alone.

Worse, we were running out of food. Except for some corn left in the pantry, there was nothing to eat. In desperation the priest ran out on
the street to scrounge up something. Once he found a dead horse that had been shot in the front of the orphanage and asked me and some other boys to help chop it up. That night he grilled the meat over some wood, and everyone had a couple of bites. The meat tasted sweet. After not eating for so long, I thought it was an incredible meal.

By late December the bombing had worsened and fires were spreading throughout the city. When a building to the right of ours was shelled, the priest got scared. He thought the Russians were probably targeting the Hungarian Gestapo’s headquarters, which were next to the orphanage. To protect us, he decided to break through the wall of our cellar and tunnel into the adjacent building where it would be safer.

With only a pickax, he and his assistant chipped away at the bunker’s stone wall, shoveling out the debris. Meanwhile bombs and shells whistled overhead. We kids watched, petrified. Eventually they dug out a large enough space for us to crawl through one at a time.

By then I hadn’t seen my father in a month and a half. I didn’t know where he or my mother were or if they were alive or dead. It was tough not having any word from them.

At the same time the firing outside was getting more severe. The older boys in the orphanage tried to act brave, but the younger ones, like Paul and me, couldn’t stop crying. He and I clung to each other while the priest kept telling us to pray.

“The war is almost over,” the priest said to everyone. With the bombing overhead, it was hard to believe, especially since the priest himself seemed scared. Only when he said I’d soon be with my parents did I have some hope.

Finally, on January 15, 1945, the Russians liberated Pest, the part of the city where I was hiding. With the priest leading us, we all went into the street to witness the events. Except for some distant shelling in the hills, it was deadly silent. I looked around and saw one building after another in rubble. Suddenly my whole body started shaking. Instead of feeling joy, I felt weak. More than ever I wanted my parents.

Six days later my father drove up in his ambulance. When I saw him, I ran into his arms and couldn’t stop crying. He had brought bread for everyone, which we quickly grabbed. We were very hungry.

Now, I thought, I’ll finally be with my parents. But Buda, the part of the city where my mother was hiding, hadn’t been liberated. My father didn’t even know if she was safe. Also, there were still pockets of Germans around who were shooting at whim, so I had to stay in the orphanage for another two months.

During that time my father visited and brought everyone food. Then in March he came for me, taking me to my aunt’s apartment, where once again the family was together. The four of us and my aunt and grandmother had survived the war.

Now we had to figure out how to get food and clothing to keep us alive. Since my father had to give the ambulance back to the government, we had no transportation. Besides, there was nothing to be bought in the city. So my parents walked forty miles back to the old village to see what they could find there. A week later they returned in a donkey cart filled with enough food for us and extra to sell. Not long after, we all left Budapest and returned to our home in Nagykata.
Of the 628 Jews who had lived in and around our village, very few had survived the war. When the villagers saw us, they acted as if we had returned from the dead.

In school, my sister and I were the only Jewish children in our classes, which made us feel strange. My parents too were uncomfortable with no other Jews nearby. So in 1949 we moved back to Budapest. Until the year before, my father had been sending donations to the orphanage. But then in 1948 the Communists banned religious schools in the country, and the orphanage ceased to exist. The building was standing, but the priest, and his assistant, and the children were gone.

I never saw the priest again, but I learned from my father that there were eight other Jewish boys in the orphanage besides Paul and me. Paul and I had suspected certain kids were Jewish, but we had been afraid to ask. It’s too bad, because it would have been comforting to know we weren’t the only ones.


QUESTIONS
1. How do Andy Sterling’s experiences illustrate the dangers of being a Jewish child during this period?
2. What actions did Andy’s parents take to protect their children during the Holocaust?
3. What might parents and children have felt during the ordeal of hiding, separation, and reunion? Use Sterling’s case as an example.
Resistance and Rescue

There was scattered resistance to the Nazi regime even in Germany. Some opposition to Hitler came from members of aristocratic families who viewed Hitler as a crude upstart and were appalled by his policies and the transformation of Germany into a police state. The small group of active opponents put their lives on the line. Virtually all of them were killed. Men like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a distinguished Lutheran minister, and Hans von Dohnanyi, a jurist who served in the army, were part of a conspiracy to oust Hitler. For years, a group within the German officer corps gingerly plotted Hitler’s overthrow, gaining adherents as the military tide turned against Germany. These army officers planned to assassinate Hitler, seize power, and negotiate peace with the Allies. After a series of abortive plans, a serious assassination attempt was finally made in July 1944, when it no longer took any special insight to see that Hitler’s continued rule was leading to Germany’s inevitable defeat. Hitler escaped the bomb blast with only minor injuries. All those who were involved in the conspiracy were killed (executed).

In 1942, the group set out to break the cycle in which “each waits for the other to begin.” Their first leaflet was a call for spiritual resistance against an immoral government. “Nothing is so unworthy of a civilized people as allowing itself to be governed without opposition by an irresponsible clique that has yielded to base instinct,” they wrote. “Every people deserves the government it is willing to endure.”

In correspondence that became known as the “White Rose Letters,” the group established a network of students in Hamburg, Freiburg, Berlin, and Vienna. “We will not be silent,” they wrote to their fellow students. “We are your bad conscience. The White Rose will not leave you in peace.” After mounting an anti-Nazi demonstration in Munich, in February 1943, the Scholls distributed pamphlets urging students to rebel. They were turned in by a university janitor. Hans and Sophie Scholl repeated the words of Goethe: “Hold out in defiance of all despotism.”

Professor Huber was also arrested. To the end, he remained loyal to Kant’s ethical teaching that one must act as though legislating for the world. Huber’s defense, his “Final Statement of
The White Rose

the Accused,” concluded with the words of Kant’s immediate disciple, Johann Gottlieb Fichte:

_And thou shall act as if_
_On thee and on thy deed_
_Depended the fate of all Germany_
_And thou alone must answer for it._

Huber and other students of the White Rose were executed a few days after the Scholls.

QUESTIONS
1. What was the White Rose?
2. What does the quote at the top of the page mean?
3. What was the significance of the existence and actions of the White Rose?

By 1939, many Jews were trying desperately to leave Germany and Austria. One such effort was the Kindertransport, or “Children’s Transport”—convoys of children from Germany and German-occupied territories who were able to leave the European continent for temporary or permanent shelter. Ellen Alexander was one of these children.

At the age of nine—maybe before then, I became very much aware of what was going on in the world, in Berlin, actually, because we were not allowed to play with the Aryan children. And people would call their children away from us because we were Jews and therefore not clean, not fit to be played with. We had to leave our school. We had to go to Jewish schools. The school that I went to with my older sister was in Berlin. I don’t know exactly which school it was, but it was attached to a synagogue. And the day that—on November 10, 1938 [Kristallnacht], we came to the school, and it was in flames. And I do remember seeing people standing around and laughing and having a wonderful time watching these flames. And that I think was probably the end of our schooling. I didn’t understand the import of all this, but it certainly made an impression on me.

How my parents got us to go on the Kindertransport I don’t know, but on May 3, 1939, my sister and I were sent to England. And my parents were not overly emotional, although they may have been, especially my mother, but she didn’t show it. And we were able to leave with a lot of other children to go to an unknown place, a place where we didn’t know the language. But that didn’t bother me much. I was young and everything was an adventure.

After we left—after the children, my sister and I left—my father was not able to work for himself or for his father-in-law anymore and was eventually made to sweep the street under some young little Nazi boy who he had to help. He had to carry the bricks and he had to sweep the streets and do very menial work. My sister and I were in England and had a pretty happy life, all in all. I couldn’t complain about our foster parents. But our parents were sent to Theresienstadt [a concentration camp in Czechoslovakia] in 1943, and I never saw my father again.


QUESTIONS
1. What was the Kindertransport?
2. How was it a form of resistance?
3. How was this family affected?
“Resistance”
Haim Gouri and Monia Avrahami

To smuggle a loaf of bread—was to resist
To teach in secret—was to resist
To rescue a Torah Scroll—was to resist
To forge documents—was to resist
To smuggle across borders—was to resist
To chronicle events and to conceal records—was to resist
To hold out a helping hand to the needy—was to resist
To contact those under siege and smuggle weapons—was to resist
To fight with weapons in streets, mountains and forests—was to resist
To rebel in death camps—was to resist
To rise up in ghettos, among the crumbling walls, in the most desperate revolt—was to resist

Gouri, Haim and Avrahami. Faces of the Uprising

QUESTIONS
1. Choose at least three different methods of resisting mentioned in the poem.
2. Describe the difference among these methods.
3. Now comment on the similarities among these methods.
This assignment is based on the five accompanying documents (A–E) and is designed to test your ability to work with historical data. Some of these documents have been edited for this task. As you analyze each document, remember its source and the author’s point of view.

**Directions**

- Carefully read the context statement and the essay question.
- Brainstorm what you know about the topic.
- Read and analyze each document, underline the key words, and write notes in the margins where helpful.
- Answer the questions for each document.
- Organize your ideas before writing the essay.
- Write a well-organized essay that includes
  - an introduction with a thesis statement
  - several paragraphs that support your thesis, including reasons and examples, evidence from the documents, and related outside information
  - a concluding paragraph

**Context Statement**

During the German occupation of Poland in World War II, any individual who helped the Jewish population risked immediate execution. Each individual had to choose whether or not to obey the laws of the state.

**Essay Question**

How did certain citizens respond to the laws passed by the state during the German occupation of Poland? How did their behavior impact history?
PROCLAMATION

Regarding:
Aiding/keeping hidden Jews

Be warned that in regard to Decree 3 regarding physical restrictions within the General Government of 15 October 1941...Jews leaving the Jewish zone without permission are subject to the penalty of death.

According to this decree individuals who knowingly provide shelter to such Jews, deliver food to them, or sell them food products, are likewise subject to the penalty of death.

The local non-Jewish population is hereby warned against:
1) providing Jews with shelter;
2) delivering them food;
3) selling them food products.

The City Chief
Dr. Franke
Czestochowa (Poland) 24.9.42


1. Who issued this proclamation? ______________________________________________________

2. What acts were made illegal by this proclamation? ____________________________

3. What was the punishment for breaking the law described in the proclamation? ___________
Spectators watch as a Polish woman is led through the town square by two Jews wearing armbands. The sign around her neck states: “For selling merchandise to Jews.” She is supposedly being taken to an execution site. In Poland, the consequence for a non-Jew helping a Jew was death. After 1940. (Zydowski Instytut Historyczny Naukowo-Badawczy, courtesy of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives).

1. For what audience do you think this photo is intended? ____________________________________________

2. What was the photographer trying to capture? __________________________________________________

3. What mood does the photograph communicate? ________________________________________________
1. From the 5th through the 7th of November 1941, a pogrom organized by the Nazis took place in our village. My mother and I were hidden at my classmate’s home. The mother of that family had three children to support. In such a terrible time these people surrounded us with kindness and care. We lived like one family; their nobleness, kindness and humanity cannot be described… These kind people saved our lives. Despite material shortages they helped other people too, not only us.

Testimony of Sonya Berstein, who was saved by Alexandra Ilyinichna Melnik and her family in the Ukrainian village of Vydoshnya.

2. My mother learned about the Nazi order for Jews to gather in a particular place and sent me with a kettle (as if for water) to her friends, the Ukrainian family Patuta. She put a little note in the kettle and the Patuta family kept me with them. My mother went to Babi Yar. Later I learned that the Paputa family tried to rescue my mother and transport her to their daughter’s village and then to partisans. But for some reason they were not successful.

The punishment for rescuing a Jew was execution. In spite of this fact, these brave and noble people accepted me into their family. Five people, including a newborn infant (the night before the daughter, Praskovia, had given birth to a son), risked their lives to save mine.

I won’t describe all the difficulty, danger and tragedy of living under occupation. The remarkable thing was the Patuta family shared all the hardships of this life with me. I became their son and grandson. Everything that belonged to them, belonged to me. For the rest of my life I have been related to them, their children and grandchildren.

Testimony of Iosif Georgievich, who was saved by the Patuta family.
Survivors’ Testimony

3. I hope that you understand what it meant to shelter two Jews in a Nazi-occupied city. They risked not only their lives, but also the lives of their four little children. The youngest, Tolik, was five years old. Even this child knew that he shouldn’t tell anyone about the couple who was living in the attic. I can’t imagine anyone else being capable of such self-sacrifice towards complete strangers.

My grandparents told this shocking story to their four children and then to us, their grandchildren. Pavel Danilovich and Anastasia Isakovna Stasyuk were considered saints in our family.

Testimony of Tamara Efimovna Rybchinskaya, whose grandparents were rescued by Pavel Danilovich and Anastasia Isakovna Stasyuk in Ukraine.

4. Two days later the Russian army entered the village and all of us were saved and liberated. It is difficult to describe the joy we felt then; it was like a prisoner sentenced to death who has got his life back as a gift, and we got our life back as a gift, thanks to this noble spirited family, the marvelous members of the Urbanos family.

Testimony of Yerachmiel Siniuk, a disabled escapee from the Kovno ghetto, who was hidden by Maria and Andrius Urbonas and their four children for several months in Lithuania. Yerachmiel smuggled seven other Jews out of the ghetto and hid them in the Urbonos barn. The Urbonoses provided shelter, food, and clothing to these eight men and women for the duration of the war.

1. List two ways that these survivors were helped by non-Jews. ______________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

2. What risks did the non-Jews take by harboring Jews? _________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

3. What impact did the actions of the rescuers have upon the Rybchinskaya family? __________
   __________________________________________________________________________________
Rescuers’ Testimony

1. “I did nothing special and I don’t consider myself a hero, I simply acted on my human obligation toward the persecuted and the suffering. I want to emphasize that it was not I who saved them. They alone saved themselves. I simply gave them a helping hand. To sum up, I should like to reiterate that I did no more than help forty-nine Jews to survive the Holocaust. That’s all.” With the suppression of the Polish uprising in the fall of 1944, Władysław Kowalski converted the basement of a razed building into a large bunker where he hid together with 49 Jews.

2. “I risked my life and extended my hospitality not because they were Jews, but because they were persecuted persons… They had been condemned to destruction for no offense on their part. This was shocking. I fulfilled a simple human obligation.” Dr. Ian Zabinsky, a Polish zoologist, helped dozens of Jews fleeing from the Warsaw ghetto by hiding them in the Warsaw Zoo until more permanent arrangements could be made.

3. “We were all taught the second great commandment: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ So I knew what I had to do… It was no big thing.” Tadeusz Soroka helped 9 Jews escape the Polish ghetto of Grodno and disguised as railroad workers make their way to Vilna.

4. “None of us thought we were heroes. We were just people trying to do our best.” During the occupation of France, Magda Trocme and her husband, Pastor Andre Trocme, helped 5,000 Jews hide in and around the village of Le Chambon, France.

5. “As for myself, I am just an ordinary person, just someone who wants to help his neighbor… I am nothing exceptional.” John Weidner organized a rescue network in France known as “Dutch-Paris” which helped approximately 800 Jews escape the Nazis.

The Path of the Righteous
The Courage to Care

1. Who were the rescuers? __________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

2. What were two reasons the rescuers gave for saying they were not heroes? ______________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

3. Choose two reasons that explain the rescuers’ actions. ________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

4. What does this document tell you about individuals’ reasons for disobeying the law? _______
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
We are somehow determined to view these benefactors as heroes: hence the search for underlying motives. The Righteous persons, however, consider themselves as anything but heroes, and regard their behavior during the Holocaust as quite normal. How to resolve this enigma?

For centuries we have undergone a brain-washing process by philosophers who emphasized man’s despicable character, highlighting his egotistic and evil disposition at the expense of other attributes. Wittingly or not, together with Hobbes and Freud, we accept the proposition that man is essentially an aggressive being, bent on destruction, involved principally with himself, and only marginally interested in the needs of others...

Goodness leaves us gasping, for we refuse to recognize it as a natural human attribute. So off we go on a long search for some hidden motivation, some extraordinary explanation, for such peculiar behavior.

Evil is, by contrast, less painfully assimilated. There is no comparable search for the reasons for its constant manifestation (although in earlier centuries theologians pondered this issue).

We have come to terms with evil. Television, movies, and the printed word have made evil, aggression, and egotism household terms and unconsciously acceptable to the extent of making us immune to displays of evil. There is a danger that the evil of the Holocaust will be absorbed in a similar manner, that is, explained away as further confirmation of man’s inherent disposition to wrongdoing. It confirms our visceral feeling that man is an irredeemable beast, who needs to be constrained for his own good.

In searching for an explanation of the motivations of the Righteous Among the Nations, are we not really saying: what was wrong with them? Are we not, in a deeper sense, implying that their behavior was something other than normal?... Is acting benevolently and altruistically such an outlandish and unusual type of behavior, supposedly at odds with man’s inherent character, as to justify a meticulous search for explanations? Or is it conceivable that such behavior is as natural to our psychological constitution as the egotistic one we accept so matter-of-factly?

Mordecai Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous: Gentile Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*, Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescuers/ADL.
New York, NY 1994. Mordecai Paldiel is Director of the Department for the Righteous, Yad Vashem.

1. Have the media influenced some people’s indifference to the Holocaust? ____________________
______________________________________________________________________________

2. Who would agree with this message? Who would disagree? Why? ________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
REFERENCES


Acknowledgements:

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