

Community and Resistance

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How have people resisted oppression throughout history?
- What is the relationship between resistance and community?
- How has a shared sense of community impacted resistance movements throughout history?
- What types of resistance to oppression do you see today?

Overview

This activity introduces students to the importance of a shared sense of community within resistance movements during the Holocaust. Students begin by reflecting on the role of community in their lives, then they evaluate the importance of the relationships in their community for developing their identity and helping them face challenging circumstances. Students will then learn about examples of a shared sense of community in resistance movements through studying testimonies from survivors of the Holocaust. Students will further analyze the concept of community in resistance movements through a station activity in which they will investigate the importance of community in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Finally, students will apply their understanding of community in resistance movements by identifying an area of need and creating a plan to promote a more inclusive school community that ensures that all students feel welcome each day.

Target Audience

Grades 9–12

Activity Duration

Two 45–60 minute sessions

Enduring Understandings

- During the Holocaust, civilians demonstrated strength and human dignity by resisting oppression, injustice, and hate through acts in opposition to the policies, actions, or authority of those in power.
- Individuals establishing supportive networks throughout their community is one of many forms of resistance to oppression, injustice, and hate.
- When faced with overwhelming adversity, individuals find ways to exhibit agency for themselves and empower others.

Materials

- Modified Testimony as Primary Source Analysis Chart (3 per student)
- Video Analysis Handout (1 per student)
- Station Activity Graphic Organizer (1 per student)

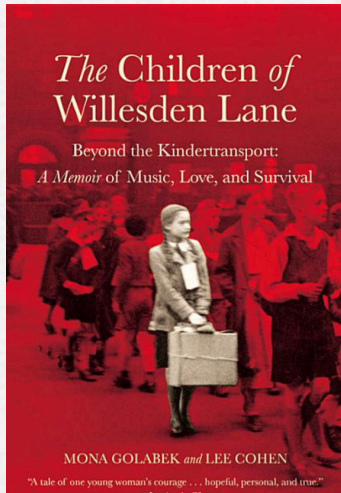
Historical Background for Educator

In 1932, Adolf Hitler, the leader of the nationalist, antisemitic, and racist National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party), was elected to the German Reichstag (Parliament). The Nazis established a single-party dictatorship referred to as the Third Reich. From 1933 until 1939, the Nazi government enacted hundreds of increasingly restrictive and discriminatory laws and decrees that banned Jews from all aspects of German public life.

During World War II, the Nazis systematically targeted Jews in Nazi-occupied territories. Jews were forced to wear identifying symbols, relocate to heavily crowded ghettos, and participate in forced labor. Millions of Jews were murdered during the Holocaust. The Nazis also targeted racial, political, or ideological groups deemed “inferior” or “undesirable”—Roma (Gypsies), homosexuals, Slavic peoples, the mentally and physically disabled, Socialists, Communists, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Resistance movements like the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising have emerged during mass atrocities and genocides as individuals and groups worked together to find ways to exhibit agency for themselves and empower others in the face of oppression. On January 18th, 1943, German forces entered the Warsaw ghetto to arrest Jews and deport them. To their astonishment, young Jews offered them armed resistance and drove the German forces out of the ghetto before they were able to finish their ruthless task. This armed resistance came on the heels of the great deportation that had occurred in the summer and early autumn of 1942, which resulted in the dispatch of 300,000 Jews, the vast majority of the ghetto's inhabitants, to Nazi camps—almost all to the Treblinka extermination camp. About 60,000 Jews remained in the ghetto, traumatized by the deportations, and believing that the Germans had not deported them and would not deport them since they wanted their labor. During four days in January, the Germans sought to round up Jews, and the armed resistance continued. The ghetto inhabitants went through a swift change, no longer believing that their value as labor would safeguard them. They began devising hiding places, and the Germans had to enter many buildings and ruthlessly pull out Jews. Many were killed in their homes when they refused to be taken. On the fourth day, having only managed to seize between five and six thousand Jews, the Germans withdrew from the ghetto.

On the eve of Passover, April 19th, 1943, German forces again entered the ghetto to liquidate it. This time they were more prepared for resistance, but so were the two Jewish undergrounds



and the ghetto population. Most of them had handguns, but a few had rifles and many homemade Molotov Cocktails. Several hundred young Jewish fighters who had no military training or battle experience confronted the German military force in pitched battles. In the hand-to-hand combat, the Germans were not able to put down the rebellion since many fighters managed to get away and retreat over the rooftops; nor could the Germans find the noncombatant Jews hiding in the bunkers. Both sides sustained losses, but the ghetto fighters knew even before they had begun that they could not defeat the powerful German forces. They fought primarily for the sake of offering resistance, for vengeance, and with the idea that the Germans should pay a heavy price for their lives. They did not believe the fighting could lead to a mass rescue, but they did hope that some fighters and ghetto inhabitants might be able to escape from the convulsing ghetto and continue offering resistance as underground members and partisans.

There are many forms of resistance, such as cultural resistance, spiritual resistance, and strategic or armed resistance, and a shared sense of community plays a critical role in these movements. Cultural resistance consists of many diverse actions, such as creating music, writing, or creating works of art. Spiritual resistance is also diverse and can include a variety of spiritual actions such as prayer, refusing to adopt new religious beliefs, or providing sanctuary in places of worship. Strategic or armed resistance movements like the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising also incorporate many actions such as organizing community resources like food, water, or financial resources; taking up arms in defense; and finding or providing locations to hide. By studying survivors of the Holocaust and the role that the concept of community plays in organizing and implementing resistance movements, students can learn the importance of spiritual resistance to hatred and oppression through history.

Sources

- <https://vhap.usc.edu/vhap.iwitness.appdata/historicalcontext/en/Holocaust.pdf>
- https://echoesandreflections.org/wp-content/themes/twentyxteenechoes/fileview.php?source=1&file_nm=2022/01/07-02-02-02_Student%20Handout_Armed_Resistance_in_Ghetos_and_Camps.pdf
- <https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/about/combat-resistance/warsaw-ghetto.html>

Procedure

Ask

- 1 Students will begin by completing a reflection on the importance of community by considering the role relationships play in their individual lives.
- 2 Begin by asking students to pull out one blank sheet of paper or one blank index card. Students will use this card to record their reflections on the following questions.
- 3 Once students have their blank sheet of paper or index card ready, the teacher will ask students to reflect by recording their thoughts on their paper as the teacher asks this series of questions:
 - What are some important aspects of my identity?
 - What role do friendships and/or personal relationships play in my life?
 - How have friendships and/or personal relationships helped me define important aspects of my identity?
- 4 The teacher may also choose to include any additional questions to support students in their reflection at the teacher's discretion.
- 5 Next, the teacher will lead students in a discussion debrief activity in which students will draw connections between the importance of their relationships in developing their identity, and the importance of relationships and community in facing challenging circumstances.
- 6 The teacher may use the following prompts to structure this debrief activity:
 - Think about a time when you faced a challenging situation in your life. What role did your friends and/or your community play in helping you face this situation?
 - Have you ever helped someone else through a challenging time in their life? How did you help that person?
 - How is a sense of community important to helping individuals face challenging circumstances in their lives?

Analyze

- 7 Next, students will analyze the concept of community in resistance movements during the Holocaust through testimonies using the *Modified Testimony as Primary Source Analysis Chart*.
- 8 The *Modified Testimony as Primary Source Analysis Chart* will be modified to orient students back to the concept of community in resistance movements.
- 9 As students prepare to view the following testimonies, help them understand the importance of the following:
 - paying attention to the speaker's tone of voice and body language;
 - considering the context and perspectives of the witness; and
 - focusing on the personal story of the testimony as opposed to facts and figures.

- 10** When viewing testimony, help strengthen the experience by:
- providing students with the biographies of the survivors providing testimony;
 - pausing clips to allow time for students to reflect, record thoughts, questions, and ideas;
 - engaging students in investigations using active inquiry;
 - promoting interdisciplinary thinking and learning through common, recurring themes; and
 - creating connections to their own lives and personal experiences.
- 11** Testimonies for Analysis:
- [Moshe Taube](#)—(1:15) Moshe describes how individuals came together under the shared sense of belonging to the Jewish community to celebrate Passover in secret during the Holocaust.
 - [Itka Zygmuntowicz](#)—(5:17) Itka describes the importance of her friendship with a girl named Bina to her surviving in Auschwitz-Birkenau.
 - [H. Henry Sinason](#)—(1:45) Henry describes how his father viewed his family as being part of the German and Jewish community pre-war and the activities that Sinason participated in as part of the Jewish community.

Apply

- 12** Next, through a station activity, students will take a deeper dive into the importance of community to resistance movements during the Holocaust.
- 13** Before beginning the station activity, the teacher will distribute the *Video Analysis Handout* to each student and play [two film clips from Yad Vashem](#) that demonstrate the sense of community shared by the Jewish people before World War II.
- These film clips will be used to establish context for how community was a driving force behind subsequent resistance movements during the Holocaust.
- 14** After viewing the film clips, the students will complete a debrief discussion with the whole class to review the importance of community shared by the Jewish people pre-war. The teacher may use the following questions to structure the debrief activity.
- What do these two videos reveal to us about the life of Jewish people before the war?
 - How was a shared sense of community important to the Jewish people before the war?
 - How might the sense of community amongst the Jewish people before the war have inspired their desire to resist the hatred and oppression perpetuated by the Nazis during the Holocaust?
 - In addition to these debrief questions, please consider the following pedagogical considerations provided by Yad Vashem:
 - We cannot understand the scope or meaning of the tragedy of the Holocaust without understanding who and what was lost in it. These films and diary entries try to convey a glimpse into the vibrancy of the pre-war Jewish world.

- It should be stressed that this video precedes the study of history. Its goal is not to provide detailed historical information about the Jewish people and Europe before WWII, but rather to provide fundamental insights into the Holocaust and the people who perished.
- Note that the Jewish people were an integral part of the fabric of life in Europe. They underwent the same complex processes of modernization that Europe was going through.
- Point out to your students that for Jewish people before the War, life was not lived with the knowledge of a grim future on the horizon. The future was open, and in many places, not necessarily grim.

15 After debriefing the video with the whole class, students will be ready to begin the Station Activity.

16 To begin, provide students with the *Station Activity Graphic Organizer* to provide structure for the station activity as students research the history of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the importance of a shared sense of community in this resistance movement.

17 The station activity features four stations, and students will be provided with 5 to 10 minutes (at the teacher's discretion) at each station to engage with the resources provided while investigating the history of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. As they navigate the stations, students will complete their *Station Activity Graphic Organizer*.

18 The four stations are: ([Resources are provided in the Student Handout Warsaw Ghetto Stations from Echoes & Reflections](#))

- Station 1: Janusz Korczak
- Station 2: Vladka Meed
- Station 3: Oneg Shabbat
- Station 4: Echoes & Reflection Timeline of the Holocaust

19 The teacher may also allow students to utilize the resources from [Yad Vashem's Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Page](#) to provide additional context to their small group station activity. This page contains a Yad Vashem article, photos, testimonies, video lectures, artifacts, and primary source documents related to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

20 As students conclude the station activity, the teacher will post one final question for students to discuss as a whole group based on their knowledge from the station activity.

- How was a shared sense of community important to resistance movements like the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising during the Holocaust?

Act

21 To conclude, students will work collaboratively in small groups of three to five to identify an area of need in their school community today.

- 22** Students will create a peer survey to interview students and identify the area of need in their school related to the concept of community. Examples of questions that students may wish to include in their peer survey might include the following:
- What grade are you currently in at our school?
 - How long have you lived in this community and attended school here?
 - Do you believe that all students in this school are treated the same?
 - Do you believe that all students in this school feel welcome and valued?
 - Do you believe that adults working at this school treat all students respectfully?
 - Do you believe that students who attend this school treat all students respectfully?
 - Are you engaged in any extracurricular activities in this school?
 - Are extracurricular activities or clubs advertised often and with clear invitations for new members?
 - Do you know what resources are available to help support student involvement in this school?
 - Do you feel like there is someone you can speak to at any time in this school if you are facing a challenging circumstance?
 - Do you regularly attend school-sponsored events, like school dances, sporting events, student performances, etc.?
 - Do you feel safe and socially accepted at this school?
 - What steps could the adults working at this school take to create a more welcoming environment?
 - What steps could students at this school take to create a more welcoming environment?
- 23** After completing their peer survey with as many students as possible around the school, the students will then sort through their survey responses to identify an area of need in the school community (welcoming new students, creating safe spaces, creating a new student organization, etc.).
- 24** Students will then create a plan to build a more inclusive and welcoming school community, and will develop a presentation for teachers and administrators to propose their plan to create a more inclusive and welcoming school community.

Connections

Connection to Student Lives	Connection to Contemporary Events	Connection to the Future
Students will develop their knowledge of a shared sense of community in resistance movements to oppression and injustice, and identify the relationship between resistance and community.	Students will analyze examples of how a shared sense of community existed in historical resistance movements to connect how critical a shared sense of community is for resistance movements to oppression or injustice today.	Students can use their knowledge of the importance of community in resistance movements to inform future student advocacy to support the establishment of more inclusive communities in their lives.

Clips of Testimony

- Moshe Taube, a Jewish survivor, describes how individuals came together under the shared sense of belonging to the Jewish community to celebrate Passover in secret during the Holocaust. (1:15)
- Itka Zygmuntowicz, a Jewish survivor, describes the importance of her friendship with a girl named Bina to her surviving in Auschwitz-Birkenau. (5:17)
- H. Henry Sinason, a Jewish survivor, describes how his father viewed his family as being part of the German and Jewish community pre-war and the activities that Sinason participated in as part of the Jewish community. (1:45)

National Standards and Frameworks

C3 Framework

D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

D3.1.9-12. Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.

D4.7.9-12. Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.

D4.8.K-2. Use listening, consensus-building, and voting procedures to decide on and take action in their classrooms.

Common Core ELA

RI.9-10.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

SL.9-10.1.C Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

SL.9-10.1.D Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

CASEL's SEL Framework

SOCIAL AWARENESS: The ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts. This includes the capacity to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. Such as:

- Recognizing strengths in others
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion
- Showing concern for the feelings of others

The Willesden Project is a global initiative that expands the reach of Lisa Jura's story of survival, resilience, and triumph as she struggles to come of age separated from her family during World War II, as originally shared by her daughter, author and concert pianist Mona Golabek, in *The Children of Willesden Lane* books and musical performances. [Learn more at The Willesden Project.](#)

Survivor and Witness Biographies



STUDENT HANDOUT

Moshe Taube

Born in Krakow, Poland, in June 1927, Cantor Taube began singing and studying music at a young age. In 1939, he and his family were interned at the Krakow ghetto, and then, in 1942, sent to the Nazi concentration camp at Krakow-Płaszów. His mother, sister, and dozens of other family members were subsequently killed, but Taube and his father were spared thanks to Oskar Schindler, the German industrialist who ran the munitions factory in which the pair were forced to work. After liberation by Soviet troops in 1945, Taube and his father were eventually able to immigrate to what was then the British Mandate of Palestine. In 1957, he moved to the United States, studied music at the Juilliard School in New York, and subsequently taught young cantors at the Jewish Theological Seminary before moving to Pennsylvania and becoming a cantor at the Congregation Beth Shalom in Pittsburgh. For seventeen years, beginning in 1971, he also held the position of Adjunct Professor of Voice and Vocal Literature at Duquesne University. In his 1996 testimony to USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive, Moshe Taube describes the transformative power of music in his development as a child in Krakow.

Itka Zygmuntowicz

Itka Zygmuntowicz, the eldest of three siblings, was born on April 15th, 1926, in Ciechanow, Poland, to Eljo and Simo Frajman. She had a brother, Srulek, and a sister, Zysl. Two years after the German invasion of Poland, Itka and her family were deported to the Nowe Miasto ghetto, and in 1942, they were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Upon arrival at the extermination camp, Itka was separated from her family and never saw her parents or siblings again. At the camp, she was assigned to sort the clothing from arriving transports and prepare it for shipment to Germany. As an act of resistance, Itka purposely damaged the clothing whenever she could. With the Soviet forces rapidly approaching, on January 18th, 1945, Itka and other prisoners were forced on a death march to the Ravensbruck concentration camp in Germany. She was then transferred to the Malchow concentration camp where she was liberated on Passover, April 26th, 1945, by the Swedish Red Cross who sent her to a hospital in Lund, Sweden, to recover. Itka was later moved to a refugee center, and from there, together with friends Bina and Regina, she went to work in a children's hospital in a small Swedish village. Later, Itka moved to the city of Boras, where she found work in a dress shop. Shortly thereafter, she and her friends were reunited. Itka and Rachmil immigrated to the United States on February 15th, 1953, and settled in Pennsylvania with their two sons, Erland and Jerry. Their sons, Samuel and Michael, were born in Philadelphia. At the time of her interview in 1996, Itka had three grandchildren.

H. Henry Sinason

Heinz Henry Sinason was born Heinz Sinasohn to Harry and Selma Sinasohn on August 26th, 1925, in Berlin, Germany. He had a brother, George. Henry's father, a decorated German World War I veteran, was a sales representative for a large textile mill. In addition to being in the boys' choir at his synagogue, Henry enjoyed seeing Yiddish films at the cinema. In 1931, Henry started school at a Catholic elementary school. In 1935, due to the escalating antisemitism of their non-Jewish classmates, Henry and his brother, George, transferred to a Jewish elementary school. On November 9th, 1938, Henry witnessed the events of the Kristallnacht Pogrom. The following night, the Gestapo arrested Henry's father. Enraged at his arrest and placement in a concentration camp, Harry showed his military decoration—the Iron Cross—to the camp's administrator. By coincidence, the officer had been Harry's regiment leader during World War I. He released Harry by giving him a 48-hour leave pass. Upon his return home, Harry made immediate arrangements to immigrate with his family to the United States, aided by relatives in New York. However, the extended waiting period made the trip impossible, so Harry and Selma sold their jewelry and bought two tickets for Shanghai, China—the only

Survivor and Witness Biographies



STUDENT HANDOUT

destination available to them. After sending their sons to live with an aunt and uncle in Paris, Harry and Selma left for Shanghai in late January, 1939. After Henry's uncle was placed in a French labor camp, the brothers were sent to a series of children's homes where they stayed busy by attending school, learning French, doing chores, and conducting religious services. Fearing for their safety, Henry and George buried their identification papers and returned to their aunt's home. During the summer months of 1941, after being placed in another children's home in rural France, the brothers were allowed to immigrate to New York. Due to financial constraints, only one could go at a time, so Henry gave the first spot to his brother and followed a few months later. His trip, which should have taken eight days, lasted three harrowing weeks. Henry's ship finally arrived at Staten Island in New York in October 1941. Then sixteen years old, Henry lived with his extended family in the Bronx where he worked at a bakery while going to night school to receive his high school diploma. In 1945, as a paratrooper in the U.S. Army stationed in the Pacific, George visited the Jewish ghetto in Shanghai and reunited with Harry and Selma, who moved to the United States in 1947. In 1949, Henry graduated from college. Shortly thereafter, he married June Meyer. At the time of his interview in 1996, Henry lived in Laguna Hills, California. He and his ex-wife had three grandchildren: Adam, Joshua, and Matthew.

Modified Testimony as Primary Source Analysis Chart



STUDENT HANDOUT

Bio: Interviewee Name: _____ Experience Group: _____

Birth Date and Place: _____

Additional Relevant Info: _____

Directions: As you watch the clip of testimony, write facts that are presented in the left column. Use the right column to note the emotions the interviewee demonstrates.

Facts: Who, What, Where, When, Why, How List the topic, dates, event details, location (city, region, country), and names/groups.	Emotions: What emotions did you notice? Notice facial and body expressions, tone of voice, pauses, and word choice.
Reflection Prompts (After viewing the testimony clip)	
What event is this person recalling? How do they feel about the event?	
What role does a sense of community play in the event this person is describing?	
How might the shared sense of community described by this individual impact their experience when faced with overwhelming adversity during the Holocaust?	

Handout: Video Analysis Handout



STUDENT HANDOUT

Directions: Record your answers to the following questions in the space below as you view the two videos from Yad Vashem.

<p>What do these two videos reveal to us about the life of Jewish people before the war?</p>	
<p>How was a shared sense of community important to the Jewish people before the war?</p>	
<p>Challenge Question: How might the sense of community amongst the Jewish people before the war have inspired their desire to resist the hatred and oppression perpetuated by the Nazis during the Holocaust?</p>	

Excerpts from The Children of Willesden Lane



STUDENT HANDOUT

	Station 1 Janusz Korczak	Station 2 Vladka Meed	Station 3 Oneg Shabbat	Station 4 Echoes & Reflections Timeline of the Holocaust
Why were some of the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto resisting? What was the motivating force behind their actions?				
How did they resist? What specific actions did they carry out?				
What were the obstacles to resistance in the Warsaw ghetto?				
How was a shared sense of community important to the actions of those involved in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising?				